DEC '08/JAN '09 | #90 | £4 / €7 / $13
WWW.DEVELOPMAG.COM

develop

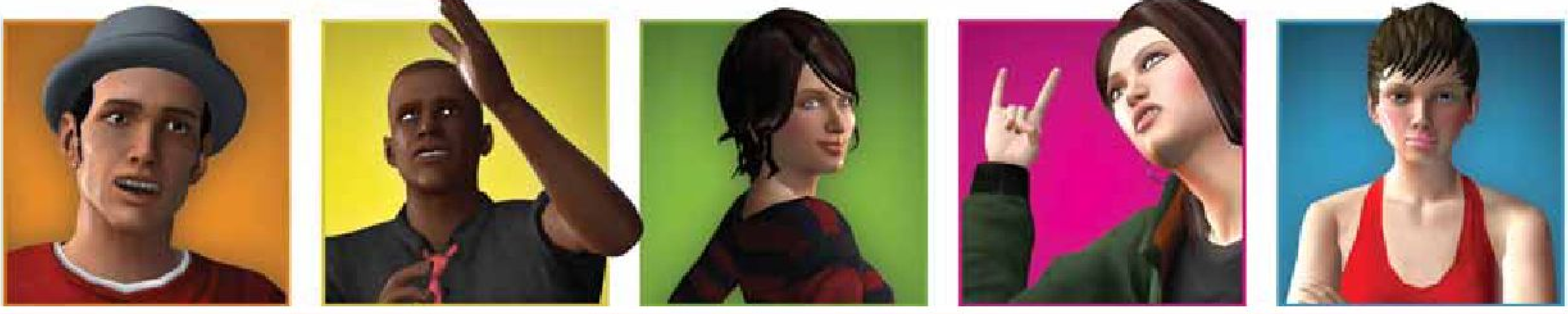
GAME DESIGN | CODING | ART | SOUND | BUSINESS

NO PLACE LIKE HOME?

How the PS3's new community service puts developers face to face with their audience

PLUS: London Calling

We profile the leading studios in the UK capital



INSIDE ▸ GAME WRITING ▪ IPHONE ▪ LOCALISATION & QA ▪ MONUMENTAL ▪ TOOLS NEWS & MORE

Wanna be a big Shot?
www.VolatileGames.com
VOLATILE GAMES

NaturalMotion, creators of euphoria, the award-winning motion synthesis technology behind GTA IV and Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, are looking to expand their Oxford-based team:

Lead Games Programmer
Gameplay Programmers
Graphics Programmers
Assistant Producer
C/C++ Runtime Programmers
C/C++ Application Programmers

For more information go to:
www.naturalmotion.com/careers
www.backbreakergame.com
Apply by email:
careers@naturalmotion.com

Contents

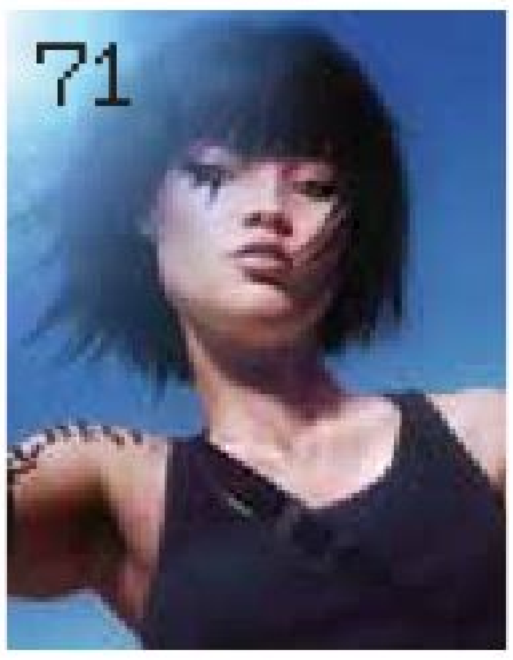
DEVELOP ISSUE 90 DEC 08/JAN 09

ALPHA

05 – 08 > DEV NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE
Denki's new XBLA title and the process that birthed it; the exchange rate effect for UK indies; plus news on the Develop Conference's return and our guide to next year's key events

12 – 18 > OPINION & ANALYSIS
Owain Bennallack on the new DS and PSP updates; Rick Gibson gives us an extended Games Up post-mortem; and The Alpenwolf mourns the open source games scene

22 – 23 > DEVELOP PUB QUIZ
They came, they drank, they conquered: the whole evening in pictures



BETA

26 – 30 > THE WRITE STUFF
Five of the UK's top games writers converge to chew the fat on how far the craft has come, and how far it has to go

34 – 36 > APPLE OF OUR EYE
Apple's iPhone marketing boss tells us why the company now wants a piece of the games market

38 – 42 > HOME IS WHERE THEIR HEART IS
COVER STORY: Why PS3 developers should be excited about Home

45 – 54 > LONDON EYE
An overview of the capital's growing game development scene

56 – 57 > MONUMENTAL
We take a peek inside the rapidly-growing online studio

59 > SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE
Why developers should think of games as part of a bigger picture

BUILD

69 > HEARD ABOUT: LITTLEBIGPLANET
How Media Molecule scored a world of infinite possibilities

71 > EPIC DIARIES
EA DICE talks about the development of *Mirror's Edge*

73 – 82 > LOCALISATION SPECIAL
An overview of movements in the field; plus Testronic tells us why you should outsource translation and Testology explains the new field of 'dev testing'

84 > TUTORIAL: VOICE DIRECTION
Side's Kate Saxon shares the secrets of working with voice directors

develop
DIRECTORY 87 - 97
STUDIOS, TOOLS, SERVICES AND COURSES

GOLD

98 > BYRONICMAN & FEATURES LIST
Simon Byron mourns the use of Metacritic in anything other than jest

develop THE INTERNATIONAL MONTHLY FOR GAMES PROGRAMMERS, ARTISTS, MUSICIANS AND PRODUCERS

Editor in chief
Michael French
michael.french@intentmedia.co.uk

Deputy Editor
Ed Fear
ed.fear@intentmedia.co.uk

Staff Writer
Will Freeman
will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

Technology Editor
Jon Jordan
jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk

Designer
Dan Bennett
dan.bennett@intentmedia.co.uk

Executive Editor
Owain Bennallack
owainb@gmail.com

Advertising Manager
Katie Rawlings
katie.rawlings@intentmedia.co.uk

Advertising Executive
Jaspreet Kandola
jaspreet.kandola@intentmedia.co.uk

Production Manager
Suzanne Powles
suzanne.powles@intentmedia.co.uk

Managing Editor
Lisa Foster
lisa.foster@intentmedia.co.uk

Publisher
Stuart Dinsey
stuart.dinsey@intentmedia.co.uk

Contributors
John Broomhall, Simon Byron, Rick Gibson, Rick Gibson, David Jefferies, Ana Kronschnabl, Mark Rein, Andy Robson, Kate Saxon, Tulay Tetiker and The Alpenwolf

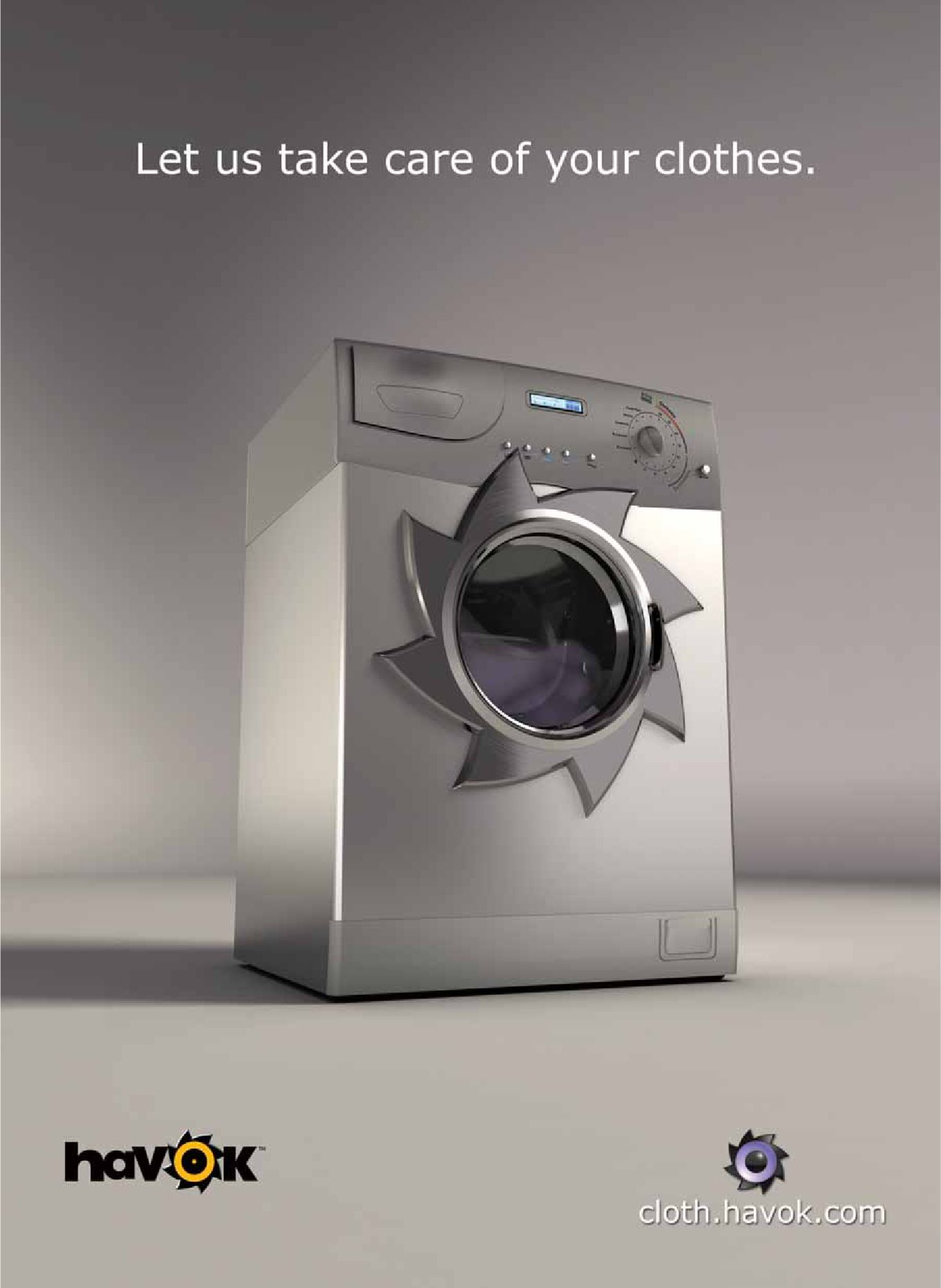
intentmedia
Intent Media is a member of the Periodical Publishers Associations

Develop Magazine. Saxon House, 6a St. Andrew Street.
Hertford, Hertfordshire. SG14 1JA
ISSN: 1365-7240 Copyright 2008
Printed by Pensord Press, NP12 2YA

Tel: 01992 535646 **Fax:** 01992 535648
www.developmag.com

CIRCULATION IS OVER 8,000

Subscription
UK: £35 Europe: £50 Rest of World: £70
Enquiries, please email: dev.subscriptions@c-cms.com
Telephone: 01580 883 848
Charges cover 11 issues and 1st class postage or airmail dispatch for overseas subscribers.
Develop is published 11 times a year, reaching 8,000 readers throughout the UK and international market.


Let us take care of your clothes.
havok™
cloth.havok.com

ALPHA

ADVENTURES IN GAMES DEVELOPMENT: NEWS, VIEWS & MORE

"It is now up to the industry to maintain the pressure on policy-makers around production tax breaks..." p15

Can the exchange rate aid studios?

News, p06

Pictures from The Develop Quiz

Report, p22

Power List: Our exclusive studio ranking

Chart, p20

Denki goes to War

New strategy word game for Xbox Live Arcade the first product built from Denki's new development process

by Will Freeman

Scottish studio Denki has new IP poised for release in the form of *Quarrel: World War One*, a hybrid of military strategy title and word puzzle that is the result of a new approach to conceiving and creating games developed by the company.

Back making games for traditional platforms, Dundee-based Denki is bringing *Quarrel* to Xbox Live Arcade, after building a catalogue of games across various interactive television outlets.

"*Quarrel* has marked a return to form," Denki's internal development manager Gary Penn explained to *Develop*.

"That's because we formed the company with the intention of doing nothing but small, original games, but had to detour slightly as the bottom fell out of the GBA market. We used that to build a war chest," explained Penn.

"We used the war chest to invest in vertical slices, and also a process we call Dragon's Denki."

Dragons Denki, as the name implies, takes influence from the *Dragon's Den* TV show, and is the first of two new approaches to creating games that Denki has envisaged.

Penn explained: "We set aside an amount with the idea being that you pitch for it, just like when we will have to pitch at the other end when we're going out to tell the publishers. So the staff would come to a core group, our three dragons, who each had a week of investment to spend, so the maximum you could get was about three weeks of investment to build a vertical slice.

"It's actually raised the bar, because you're not just coming along shooting the breeze with an idea; but you actually have to put some effort into it. You'd think that might scare people off, but it didn't: it encouraged people to put the effort into ideas they really believed in."

Despite the playful process name, the Dragon's Denki process is one Penn believes give his employer an edge over rival studios: "Certainly from our own point of view it yielded better results, rather than lightly discussing, or doing dry or even sexy paper documents. You tend to loose a lot there because until these things actually exist you never really know what you're getting into anyway."

Along with Dragon's Denki, the studio has developed what Penn calls 'our style guide'. 'The Denki Difference' is in effect a design mantra that boils down all the values that must be adhered to in pursuit of creating output worthy of the studio. Finalising the list this year, the end product must be defined by a feel of substance and emotive quality, a level of drama, a sense of the product being alive, convenience and a twist on the expected. Other values, such as the pursuit of illusion over simulation, also dictate exactly the kind of game Denki strives to develop, and *Quarrel* is part of that.

"We're not just getting back on the original horse. This is a full steam ahead gallop," explained Penn.

As well as this new XBLA title, Denki is also working on a Wii title which will be officially announced shortly.

www.denki.co.uk

> ***"Quarrel marks a return to form for Denki..."***
>
> ***Gary Penn***

Editorial

Followers of fashion

There have been a number of emerging trends over the past twelve months that we've witnessed.

'Embracing failure' was a powerful message from 2K Boston in its Paris GDC talk on the long and winding road of *Bioshock's* evolution.

Another was the 'power of smaller teams' within existing studios – a view which had two particular champions in the stunning *Portal* and Develop Award-winning *Lost Winds* from Frontier.

And then there's the surprise money-making potential of the iPhone.

All stand-outs of 2008 for sure, but perhaps the most disruptive was the notion of seeing game development as less about the shipping of a boxed product and more about providing an on-going service to players.

If that sounds too much like business-speak, the thing that should excite you is the potential to launch quickly and on a small scale, adding content and evolving the game itself over time in response to player feedback. It works: Valve's experience with *Team Fortress 2* lead it to claim that all of its games, even the single-player ones, will be made this way in the future. Another example is London Studios' PS3 not-social-network Home. Itself a continually evolving platform that will grow based on user and third-party feedback, the team aren't foolish in their expectations of third-party support. They know that there's a good chance you might not support it out of the box, but they're banking on this very service model; that as you continue to update, patch and expand your game you might be able to fit some manner of Home support in there too.

Make no mistake: as we see elsewhere on this page, the worsening economic climate is going to hit developers, no matter how many industry talking heads will try to assure us otherwise. And yet, it's in times of struggle that innovation tends to prevail. Perhaps those studios that can exploit the ever-widening revenue generation possibilities will be the ones that don't just survive the slump, but instead thrive.

Have a great Christmas and New Year, and we'll see you in 2009.

Ed Fear
ed.fear@intentmedia.co.uk

More bytes

SPECIAL REPORT: Has the pound's plunge against the dollar boosted the international attractiveness of UK developers?

by Owain Bennallack

What's bad for Brits shopping in New York is good for your local indie studio. The £1 to $2 exchange rate that made iPods in the Big Apple cheap also made hiring UK studios more expensive for US publishers.

After two years hovering around the $2 mark, however, the pound has fallen sharply since the end of July, dropping as far as to dip below $1.50 as of December 10th. If you're a UK company, that means you've become 25 per cent cheaper for your US customers, at no cost to you. And if you're a US publisher, you can reconsider British studios without baulking at the sticker price.

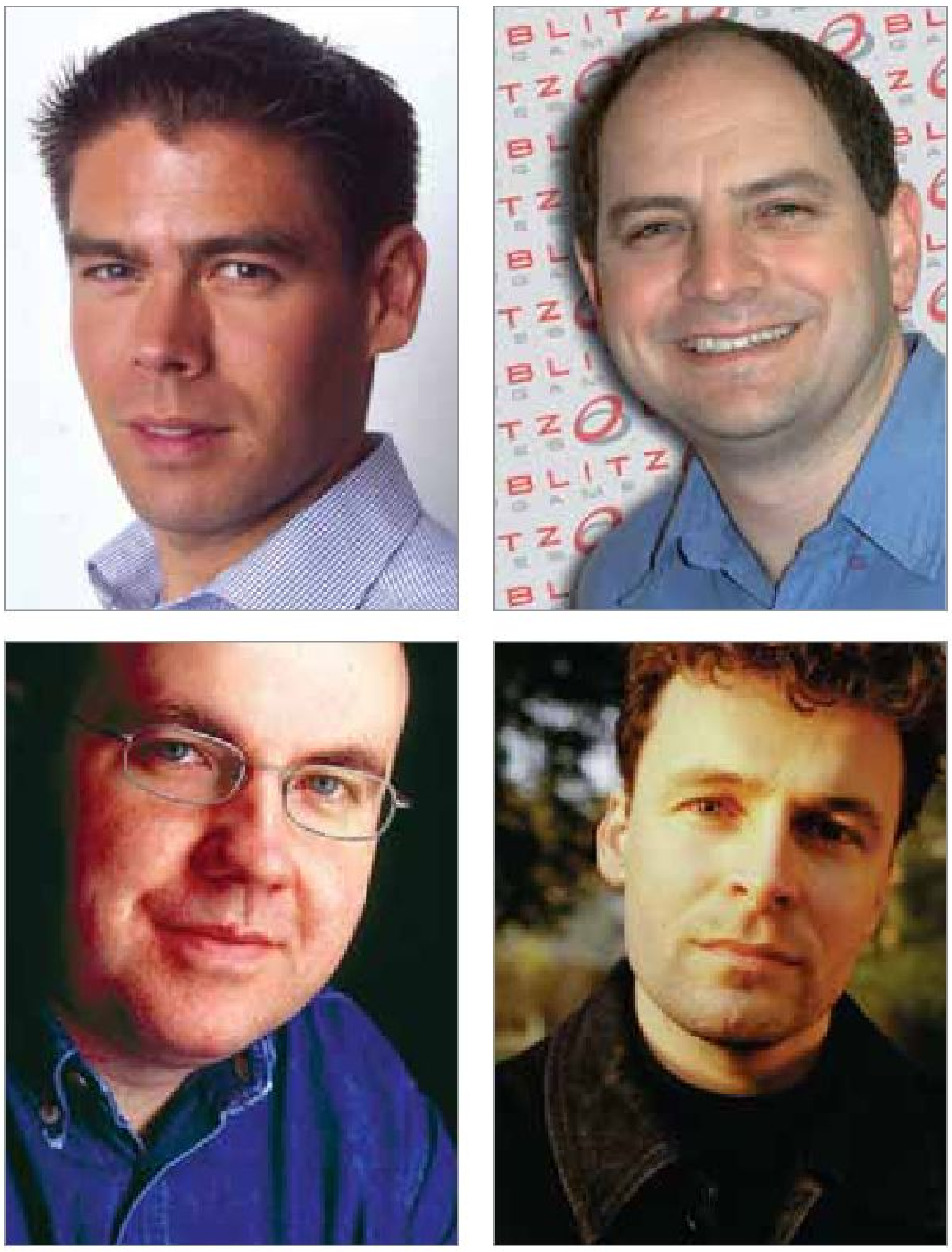
"I believe it has been enormously helpful," says analyst Nick Gibson of Games Investor Consulting, adding that he has spoken to developers who've won contracts due to the weakening pound. "US publishers are very price conscious and understandably so. A ten per cent exchange rate movement for a $10m title has substantial cost implications. Multiply this by the number of titles being developed outside of the US and you have a potential budgeting nightmare."

From the perspective of a UK citizen, the sudden drop in the pound is a cause for concern, even if economists agree that the sterling was overvalued. With the national debt rising and the country headed into a recession, the markets are taking a much dimmer prospect of the UK economy than before.

"But every cloud has a silver lining," says Philip Oliver, CEO of Blitz, "and in this instance it's the reverting of the dollar to pound

> ***"The dollar to pound exchange rate has been hurting UK developers for the past few years..."***
> ***Philip Oliver, Blitz***

for the buck



Clockwise from top left: Nick Gibson, Philip Oliver, Chris Kingsley, Darren Jobling

exchange rate that has been hurting UK developers for the past few years."

Rebellion's Jason Kingsley agrees. "We've been absorbing the 'bad' rate for some time now when compared to rates we were using in the past," he says. "It's a great relief to have this change in fortunes."

The news isn't entirely rosy, however. Development is now a globalised industry, and the falling pound has a downside for studios that aggressively outsource: their costs are going up, offsetting some of the competitiveness gains.

Eutechnyx's Darren Jobling says that outsourcing arrangements are typically made with companies with local currencies linked to the dollar. "For example, both of Eutechnyx's studios in Asia are now 20 per cent more expensive than 12 months ago, as both the Chinese RMB and the Hong Kong dollar are linked to the US dollar," he explains. "However, for those existing contracts budgeted at the $2 per £1 exchange rate, things are looking pretty good."

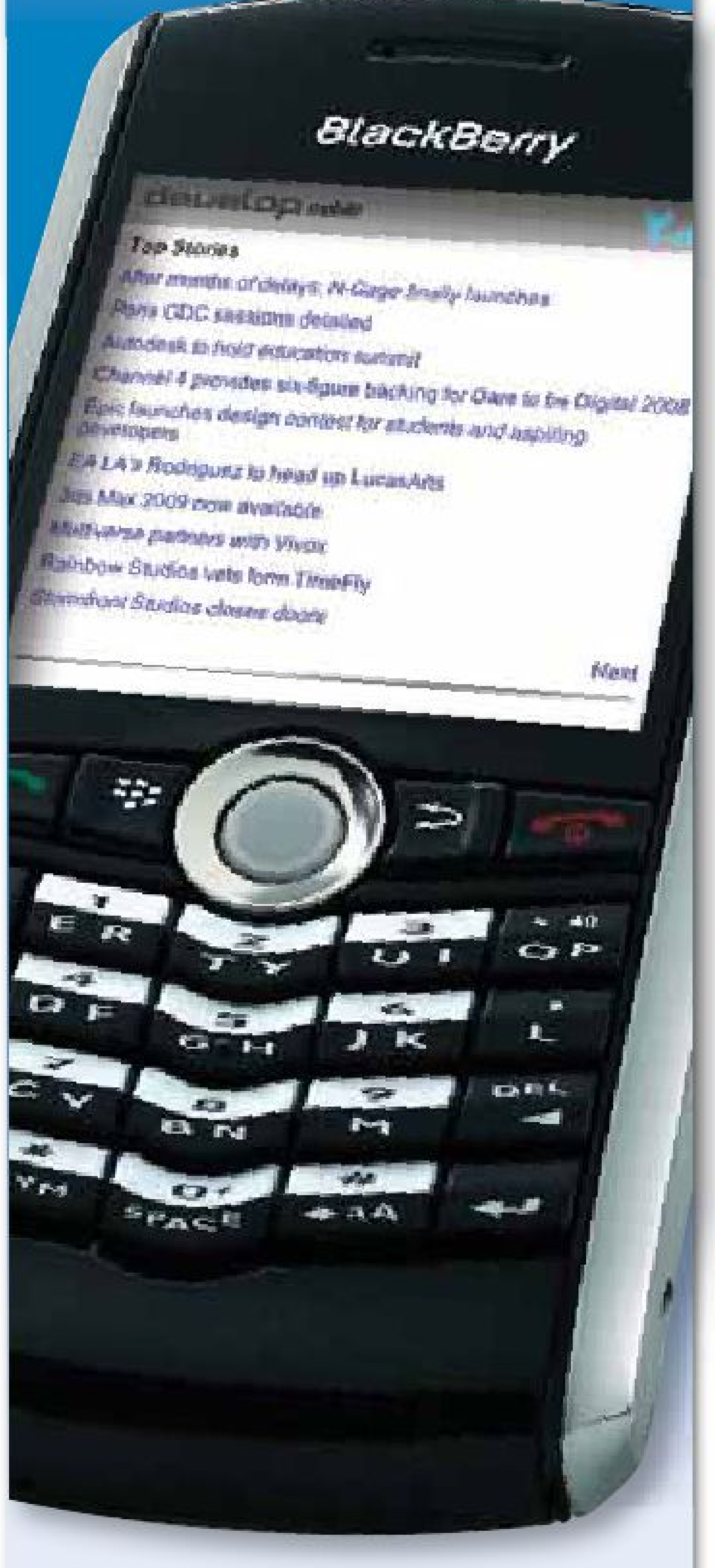
The currency gyrations cannot be divorced from the financial crisis behind them, either. "The bigger deal is that a lot of publishers are having difficulty financially due to the global financial crisis and the effect on share prices," Philip Oliver notes. "As a result, publishers are booking less games rather than cheaper games."

Most publishers realise that pricing is only part of the equation, with quality and reliability at least as important – something echoed by all the developers we spoke to. As Jobling says, if price was the only factor, the games industry would have decamped to China years ago.

Another factor is that UK independents that've survived the past few years are consequently pretty resilient. "We've noticed a movement of projects to the bigger studios, where we have professional processes and systems in place to help support creativity and de-risk, as well as having back-up resources for when unforeseen opportunities arise," says Jason Kingsley.

The bottom line is that, with US publishers funding most third-party games, a weaker pound is a boon – but it's not the whole story.

The shortage of skilled graduates remains a huge issue, but it's the ongoing lack of government support that really grates. The weakening pound may have somewhat levelled the international playing field, but while foreign studios receive assistance from their taxpayers, the game remains weighted against our talented and newly competitive developers.



develop mobile

THE LATEST INDUSTRY NEWS ON YOUR PHONE

ALL THE LATEST NEWS AND VIEWS DIRECT TO YOUR MOBILE WHEREVER YOU ARE

BOOKMARK IT NOW:
MOBILE.DEVELOPMAG.COM

Develop Conference calls for speakers

UK community offered chance to shape summer Brighton conference

The organisers of July's Develop Conference are now accepting speaker submissions. Prospective speakers can now submit ideas for the event, which takes place in Brighton from July 14th to 16th 2009.

The Develop Conference is now in its forth year, and attracts over 1,200 attendees from 22 territories, making it Europe's leading event for the game development community.

Andy Lane, managing director of Tandem Events said: "Game developers across the UK and Europe have come to regard the Develop Conference as the leading event for their community.

"Each year it attracts a stellar cast of some of the industry's most informative, thought provoking and entertaining speakers and the call for submissions offers the chance for developers themselves to help shape the programme.

"It combines lively, topical sessions and debates, plus the prestigious Develop Awards and a host of other networking events, so if developers only go to one event in 2009, it's got to be Brighton in July."

Lane also promised that the event next year will feature a new angle on some sessions covering emerging fields in games development – more on which we'll reveal in the next issue.

Delegates interested in hosting a session can submit their proposals via the online form at the official website. The submissions deadline is March 1st 2009.

www.develop-conference.com

14-16 JULY 2009 develop in Brighton

New 'man for Develop

Develop has been boosted with the addition of a new staff writer.

Will Freeman comes to *Develop* from now-closed games trade monthly *In Stock*. He's written for a diverse number of publications from *Videogamer.com* and *Viz*, and he also writes regular games reviews for *The Observer*.

At *Develop*, Freeman will have a number of general editorial responsibilites and will also contribute to its sister websites *Developmag.com*, *MCVuk.com* and *CasualGaming.biz*.

He can be reached at Will.Freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

DEVELOP DIARY

YOUR COMPLETE GAMES DEVELOPMENT EVENT CALENDAR FOR THE MONTHS AHEAD...

CASUAL CONNECT HAMBURG
February 10th to 12th
Hamburg, Germany
Casual Connect's first European outing of the year this time calling the world's casual game developers to converge in Hamburg for the usual mix of high-profile speakers, roundtables, and those all-important networking drinks.

ELAN AWARDS
February 29th
Vancouver, Canada
Canada's premier arts and games awards returns for its third outing, complete with red carpet glamour – this time widening its remit to celebrate the visual effects world too.

FEBRUARY 2009

CASUAL CONNECT HAMBURG
February 10th to 12th
Hamburg, Germany
europe.casualconnect.org

DICE SUMMIT
February 18th to 20th
Las Vegas, USA
www.dicesummit.org

ELAN AWARDS
February 29th
Vancouver, Canada
www.theelans.com

MARCH 2009

BAFTAS
March 10th
London, UK
www.bafta.org/awards/video-games

GDC 09
March 23rd to 27th, 2009
San Francisco, USA
www.gdconf.com

GAMES GRADS 09 – NORTH
March 17th
Manchester, UK
www.gamesgrads.co.uk

GAMES GRADS 09 – SOUTH
March 19th
London, UK
www.gamesgrads.co.uk

APRIL 2009

MCV INDUSTRY AWARDS
April 23rd
London, UK
www.mcvuk.com

MAY 2009

GDC CANADA
May (final dates TBC)
Vancouver, Canada
www.gdc-canada.com

JUNE 2009

E3
June 2nd to 4th
Los Angeles, USA
www.e3expo.com

JULY 2009

DEVELOP IN BRIGHTON
July 14th to 16th
Brighton, UK
www.develop-conference.com

DEVELOP INDUSTRY AWARDS
July 15th
Brighton, UK
www.developmag.com

AUGUST 2009

GDC EUROPE
August 17th to 19th
Cologne, Germany
www.gdceurope.com

LEIPZIG GAMES CONVENTION
August 19th to 23rd
Brighton, UK
www.developmag.com

GDC CHINA
August 27th to 29th
Shanghai, China
www.chinagdc.com

centroid
MOTION CAPTURE

The Power of Movement Online

Celebrating twelve years of providing motion capture services of the highest quality to the film, television and gaming industries, Centroid is proud to announce the launch of an all new online presence in the guise of two industry-leading websites...

www.centroid3d.com www.

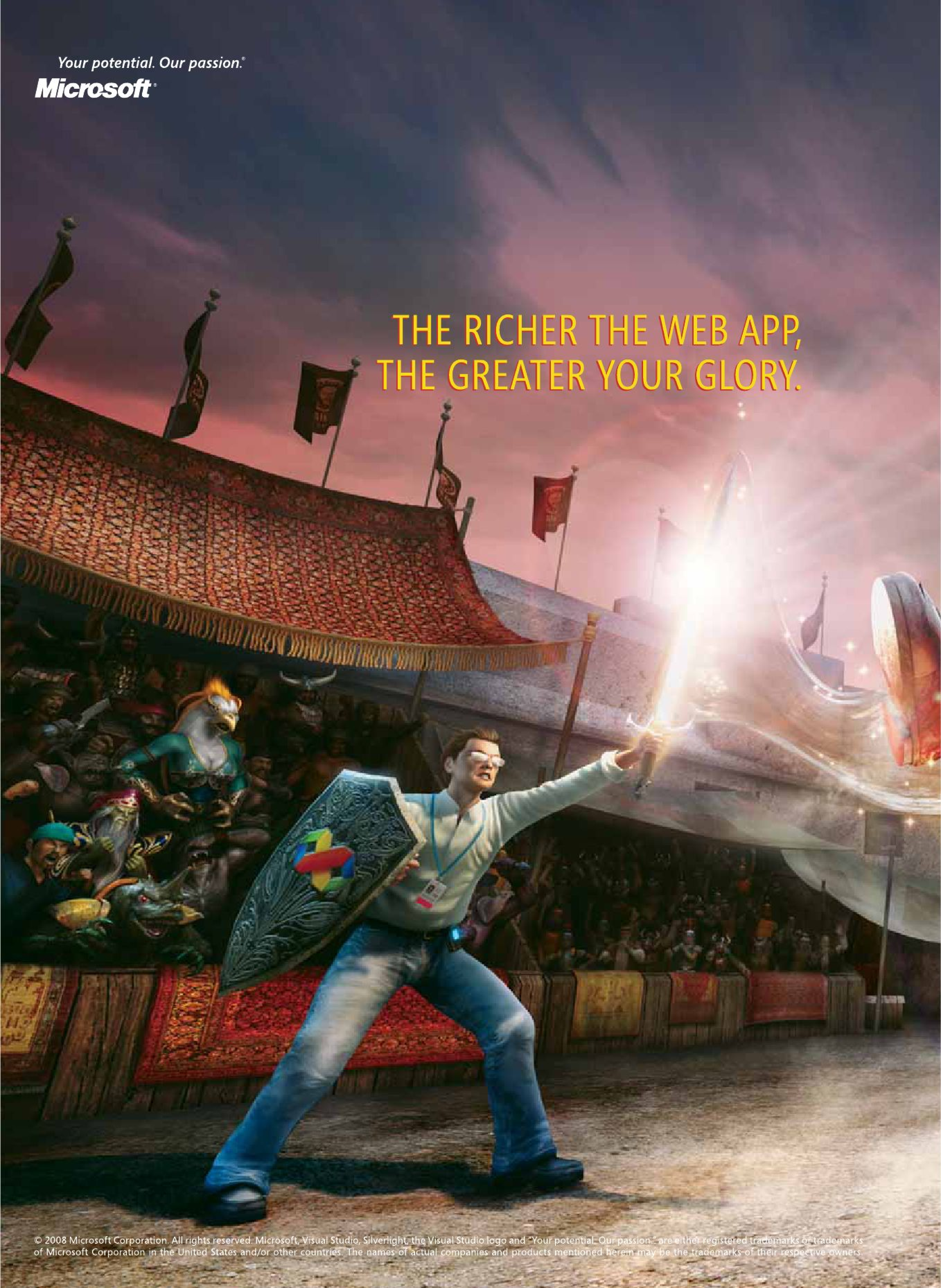
Our new corporate website provides information and an extensive creative portfolio complete with high-quality showreels and visuals from many of our projects spanning blockbuster movies, award winning television commercials and chart topping game titles.

www.centroidonline.com

Centroid online provides a mocap data processing solution to the world, shoot it in a studio of your choice and process it online, on time and at an unbeatable price. Also introducing a world class library of copyright free mocap moves for purchase as a download.

www.centroid3d.com

Your potential. Our passion.®
Microsoft®



© 2008 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft, Visual Studio, Silverlight, the Visual Studio logo and "Your potential. Our passion." are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries. The names of actual companies and products mentioned herein may be the trademarks of their respective owners.

Microsoft® Visual Studio®
+DEFY ALL CHALLENGES

Your challenge: more compelling Web apps for more platforms. Defy it: use Visual Studio® tools for Silverlight™ that open new worlds of functionality. More tips and tools at **defyallchallenges.co.uk**

VARIABLE DECLARATIONS

by Owain Bennallack

Sony and Nintendo leave portable innovation to others – for now

Compared to the original DS/PSP showdown, the recent head-to-head between Sony and Nintendo's revised handheld consoles has been a rather limp-wristed affair. Rather than ushering in anything radically new, the manufacturers have tweaked what their respective machines did well four years ago and filled in a few gaps – or repeated the same mistakes.

With Nintendo basking in Wii's ascendancy while Sony looked for PlayStation 3's escape velocity, the new handhelds were never going to be top priority. A shame, given the achievements of both portables – most obviously with the 80 million-selling DS, whose clever Touch Generations! games prepared the ground for both Wii's radical control system and gaming's push into the mainstream, but also for PSP, which once looked space age, provided top-up booster rations for several UK studios during the transition period, and which has itself sold an under-appreciated 40 million units.

Sony's PSP-3000 adds little more than a built-in microphone to the mix

CAMERA ANGLES

Looking at the revamped Nintendo DSi first, the most immediately significant new feature is its dual cameras. Pundits bemoaning the lens' lack of megapixels make the same mistake as those who scratched their heads at the stylus back in 2004: Nintendo has once again given inventive developers new tools with which to build innovative gameplay, and has already announced first-party fruit with the DSi-exclusive *WarioWare: Photograph*. At the least allowing for *EyeToy* gameplay in amusing public places, these two cameras will surely spark something unexpected before long.

The other big hardware change is an SD card slot plus built-in flash memory, and DS owners will now be able download games and other software from Nintendo's DSi Shop – none of which needs much explaining these days. A console without the capacity to store and run substantial downloaded software is becoming as antiquated as a personal computer with a cassette deck, so the DS needed to catch up – though Nintendo will probably use these features to tackle piracy more than claw back revenues from retailers to begin with. Nobody can really expect an App Store-esque anything goes approach from Kyoto, but paid-up DS developers will doubtless be doing something unprecedented with downloadable content before long, too, potentially rousing the Japanese market from its recent apathy towards Nintendo's once-revered machine.

> **"A console without the capacity to store and run downloaded software is becoming as antiquated as a computer with a cassette deck..."**

PRETTY INDIFFERENT

Elsewhere, the DSi offers minor cosmetic and functional improvements such as a bigger screen and better speakers. Then again, that's really all Sony's PSP-3000 brings to the table. There's even some debate as to whether the PSP-3000's brighter screen is actually an improvement, while you'd need to be a Spot the Ball superstar to see much difference between PSP Slim & Lite and the 3000 model without your glasses.

The only hardware innovation of note is the addition of a built-in microphone, which will at least save owners from having to suffer the turkey in *Talkman* that I endured to get hold of one. While the built-in mic allied with Skype means the long-rumoured PSP phone can now be a cobbled-together half-reality, the DS always had a mic, and few developers will support it in gameplay when there are so many deaf PSPs about.

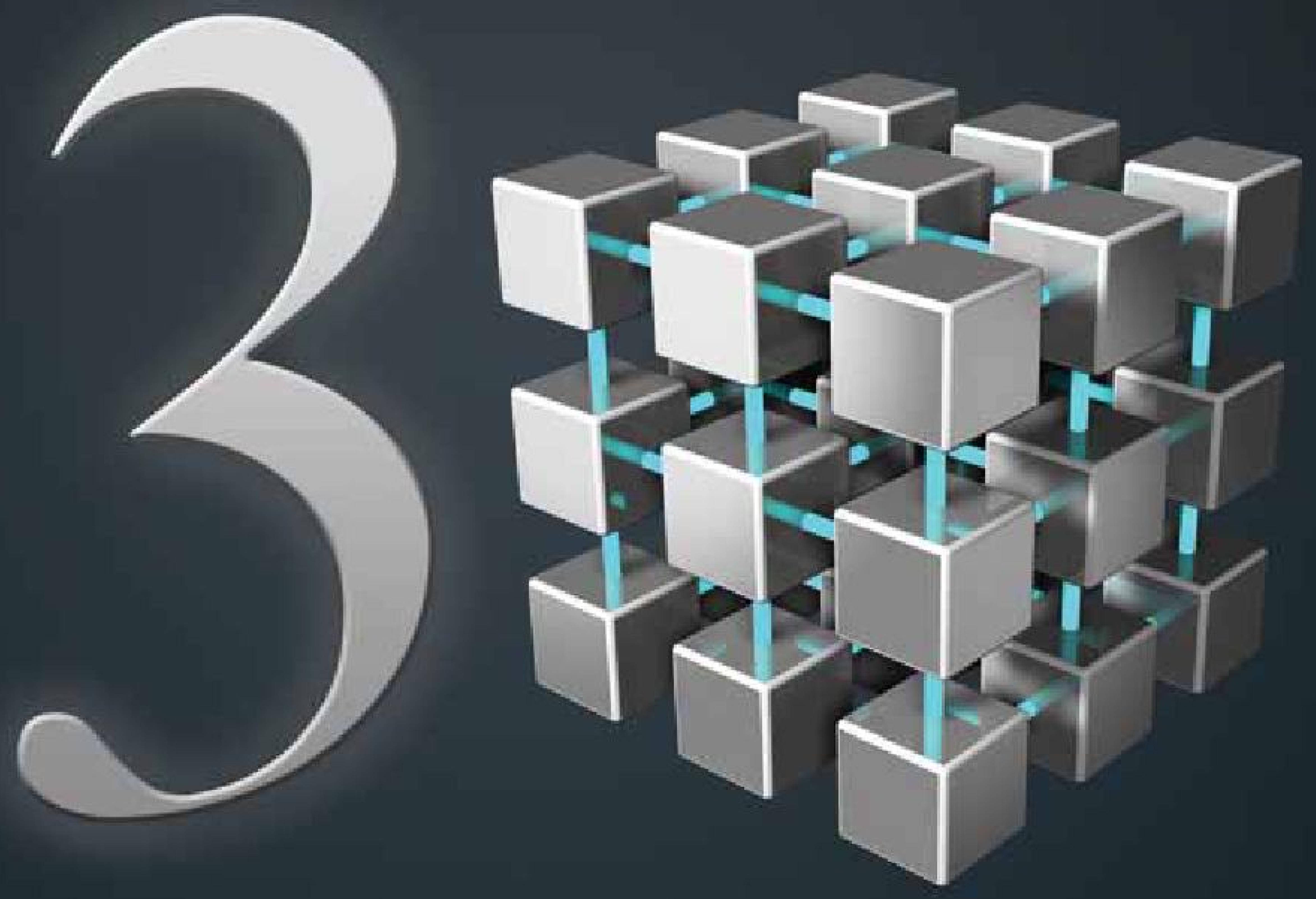
Backwards-compatibility would hamstring Sony even if it had wanted to introduce a touchscreen, accelerometer or the other sexy additions its fans anticipated. Rather, PSP continues to offer a steadily less remarkable portable multimedia experience, allied to suite of sometimes-excellent games that have failed to shrug off an air of *déjà vu* on a funny disc.

It's particularly ironic that having just released the defining game of this console generation – Media Molecule's superlative user-generated, Internet-enabled playground, *LittleBigPlanet* – Sony has left PSP's potential for sharing, swapping gameplay go stillborn. That it's only with firmware 5.0 that you can access the PlayStation Store directly via PSP says it all.

DSi and PSP-3000 won't set the world alight, then, nor distract the industry from the ongoing living room battle. Given the consoles' still fresh-ish 120 million combined installed base, you can understand why Nintendo and Sony would prefer to sweat their assets rather than risk radical surgery. But with mobile phones and Apple's devices encroaching daily on their territory, both handhelds must spawn spectacular sequels come 2010.

Owain Bennallack is executive editor of *Develop*. He edited the magazine from its launch until its February 2006 issue. He has also worked at *MCV* and *Edge*, and has provided consultancy and evaluation services to several leading developers and publishers. He is also chairman of the *Develop* conference advisory board.

The gaming industry doesn't
have to be a puzzle

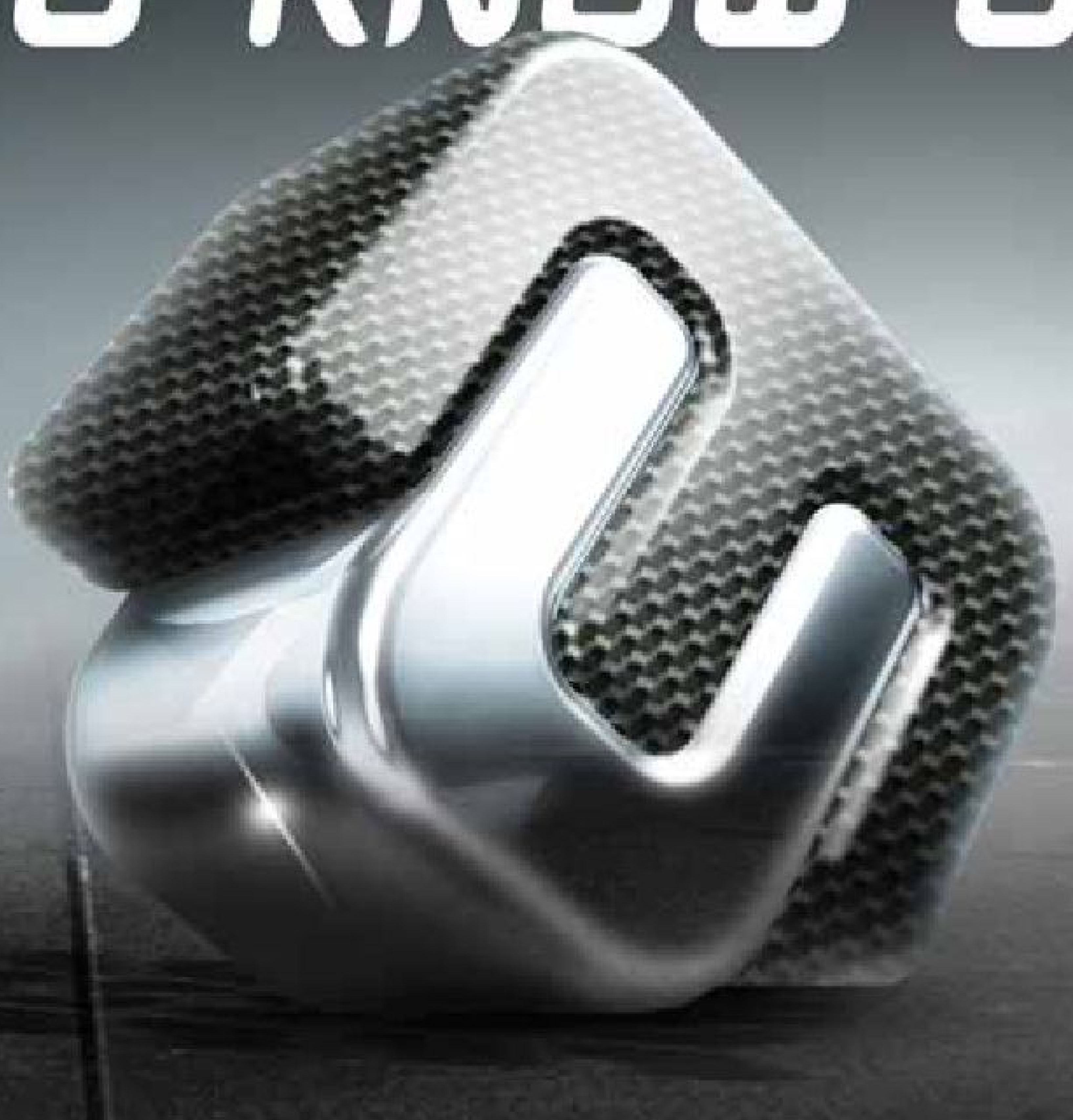


30 years experience in business development solutions for:

🟩 Developers 🟥 Publishers 🟨 Service Providers 🟦 Brand Owners

FOG STUDIOS

www.fogstudios.com



With a well-deserved reputation for bringing excellent and innovative games to all types of players from all over the world, and a massive investment into developing powerful new technology... there's never been a better time to play at Codemasters!

With over 60 no.1 titles in the trophy cabinet, and more to come... we're a leading force in the games industry. Be it action, fantasy, driving or war-based gaming... there's something for everyone. Combine all of this with Codemasters Studio's powerful EGO™ Engine technology and we are making a whole new unstoppable generation of games.

So, with our investment in people, technology and quality, it means that we are built to win! If you want to be part of the fastest growing studio in the UK, take a look at the many positions available.

to find out more go to:
www.codemasters.com

or email:
Developmagazine@codemasters.com

codemasters™

©2008 The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters"). All rights reserved. "Codemasters"® is a registered trademark owned by Codemasters and the Codemasters logo is a trademark of Codemasters.

The Game's not nearly up

In an extended version of his monthly column **Rick Gibson** looks at the success of the Game Up campaign…

After six months of press, lobbying and reports, Games Up? has almost run its intended course. Always planned as a short-term campaign, it highlighted two major issues at the heart of studios' agendas, and is handing over to Tiga and ELSPA. But what has it achieved? As one of the campaign's organisers, I will look back at its goals, achievements and the remaining challenges.

Lobbying to parliament, one of the key parts of Games Up? continues even now

THE CONTRIBUTORS

The campaign risked being been stillborn without a strong and broad coalition of studios who supported the campaign. After a strong push from Phil Harrison, some of the UK's biggest studios – SCEE WWS, Microsoft, Activision, Frontier, Eidos, Codemasters, NCSoft, Real Time Worlds, Ubisoft, Blitz, Sports Interactive, Sega, Exient, Relentless, Jagex, Qantm, Media Molecule and Splash Damage – stepped up to support the campaign. Tiga and ELSPA lent their vital support, joining a steering committee with SCEE, Frontier, Eidos and myself to manage this intensive campaign.

THE ISSUES

The campaign chose two major issues central to studios' strategic thinking: tax and skills. These were formulated into firm policies by the trade bodies, representing a unified call for games production tax credits (like those available for film) and a greater flow of higher quality graduates from UK universities. We had to walk a fine line, highlighting the difficulties the industry faces around global competition, costs, and recruitment, while also emphasising why the industry is so important to the UK, in economic, cultural and social terms.

Importantly, studios wanted to make clear what the industry can give back in return for greater governmental support. Games Investor Consulting's background information and latest data, including a rapid census of UK studios, painted a similarly nuanced picture of an industry facing decline from high costs, non-existent government support, and skills shortages – and yet also at the top of its game, creating enormous value, outstripping film in revenues per head and probably heading back to third in the global rankings (thanks in great part to the efforts of Rockstar North).

> **"Few would have signed up to a campaign promising to deliver solutions in six months…"**

THE METHODOLOGY

Few would have signed up to a campaign promising to deliver solutions to these issues in six months. The more realistic, if necessarily woollier, goals were to change the nature of the debate around support for games developers.

Any Minister persuaded by the industry's overture would have to face three main obstacles: back-bench MPs largely ignorant about games studios; mainstream media misinformed and pedalling gory headlines about games; and, holder of the purse-strings, Her Majesty's Treasury. With those three targets in mind, the campaign appointed a mainstream, non-games PR agency to address mainstream media, a well-connected lobbying company to co-opt policy-makers inside and outside Government, and, eventually, an economics team to address the Treasury.

THE MEDIA

Launching in an organ better known for slating games, the *Mail on Sunday*, the press campaign generated positive coverage in a wide range of major UK media such *The Guardian, The Times, The Independent, FT* and *The Economist, BBC One Breakfast, One O'Clock News* and News 24, three times on Radio 4's *Today* programme, plus other national and local media. Online and in the trade press, the coverage was also wide. The PR agency, 3 Monkeys, generated coverage worth £350,000+ (excluding the BBC) – nearly nine times its cost.

The downside was that more positive angles of our story were sometimes downplayed by journalists seeking sharper headlines. We deliberately chose some provocative headlines, and while this approach won column inches, it did trigger anger from the education sector. We felt it honestly reflected the sponsors' opinions, and it has brought a previously private debate around the industry's educational requirements into the open, which could produce positive change.

THE LOBBYING

The lobbyists, Precise Public Affairs, ran a twin-track campaign. On one track, it recruited studios to invite their constituency MPs to visit. Nearly 20 developers joined in, and probably the most high profile was the Shadow

▶

DESIGN YOUR OWN FUTURE AT QANTM

STUDY GAMES DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

OTHER COURSES AVAILABLE
3D ANIMATION
GAME AUDIO PRODUCTION
GRAPHIC DESIGN
IPHONE DEVELOPMENT
WEB DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

020 7833 0578
WWW.QANTM.COM

qantm COLLEGE

▶ Chancellor George Osborne, who visited Travellers' Tales, and, like many, was surprised and impressed that such work occurred in his constituency. On the other track, Precise organised nearly 20 meetings between policy makers and campaign representatives, including a lunch in the Commons with high profile MPs and civil servants. Olswang, who helped draft the film tax credit, have kindly added their expertise.

Overall, there was surprise at how much traction the campaign has generated with MPs. While a tax break is still not imminent, we've generated much more political capital for future governmental assistance, as well as a good handful of parliamentarians ready to speak up in the House on our behalf.

> ***"It is now up to the industry to maintain the pressure on policy-makers around production tax breaks…"***

THE TREASURY

A response from the Treasury came as a surprise, because all the civil servants we spoke to initially said we were knocking on a closed door. The combination of the campaign's launch, its media impact, Lord Digby Jones and a few other ministers all provoked an unprecedented call for evidence for tax support from the Treasury. They specified what evidence they wanted in their preferred format, and we left no stone unturned to produce comprehensive reports.

Specialists Oxford Economics worked with GIC and other industry contacts to create two reports. NESTA funded one independent report on market failure, which will conclude that market failure is present in the industry, thus justifying intervention. The campaign funded another, which established that the development industry directly and indirectly contributes over £1bn to GDP and £420m in tax revenues. Finally, NESTA and GIC are independently reporting on the UK's competitiveness to answer the Treasury's remaining questions. A meeting with the Treasury is imminent.

THE FUTURE

This concerted push has raised the profile of the industry in the media, in Parliament and at the Treasury, all of whom rarely considered games as a serious and world-leading British industry worthy of their support. It has also generated new but hopefully lasting political relationships as well as media interest for ELSPA and Tiga to build upon. There is a very real sense of momentum around the campaign's agenda, not least because tax breaks are being proposed by all sides of the house as the way to help British business in time of recession. It is now up to the industry to maintain the pressure on policy-makers around production tax breaks, and interact more closely with universities to ensure their graduates are ready for real-world jobs.

Many companies have given significant amounts of time, energy and financial support to back the campaign and drive its agenda forward. In every case, that support stems from a deep seated belief in the importance, quality and impact of UK studios which must be sustained by the right level of Government support. Many, many thanks for your generosity.

__Rick Gibson__ is a director at Games Investor Consulting, providing research, strategy consulting and corporate finance services to the to the games, media and finance industries. www.gamesinvestor.com

NOTTINGHAM
MANCHESTER
INDIA

It's been a MONUMENTAL year

With three studios in Manchester, Nottingham and India, Monumental Games is now firmly established as one of the world's premier online game developers, and in 2009 we're raising our game with even more investment in both our talent and our technology.

We are always looking for great people to join us – coders, artists, designers, community managers and administrators. With a working environment second to none, excellent remuneration and great career prospects, you'll be amazed at what you could achieve at Monumental.

To find out more about what we're up to, or how you could help us do it, either visit www.monumentalgames.com - or come along to our brand new Nottingham headquarters in the heart of the city's historic Lace Market. Just give us a call on +44 (0) 115 934 2330.

Monumental Nottingham: Price House, 37 Stoney Street,
The Lace Market, Nottingham, NG1 1LS, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 115 934 2330

Monumental Manchester: 2nd Floor, Laser House, Waterfront Quay,
Salford Quays, Manchester, M50 3XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 161 877 2865

Email: enquiries@monumentalgames.com

MONUMENTAL

DESIGN DOC

by The Alpenwolf

Where are the Open Source games?

YOUR RESULTS
Your dance was so great!
99
1ST
FANTASTIC
PERFECT
GREAT
GOOD
BOO
MISS
MAXCOMBO
EASY
0000012676
Press START to continue

StepMania is one of the few well-known Open Source games

I am writing this article on an excellent, professional word processing software application that was not developed by a corporation, but by a group of individuals motivated to create a better word processor than Microsoft Word. In my opinion, they have succeeded; I prefer OpenOffice to Word, especially with OpenOffice's built-in ability to export and edit PDF files. When I finish this article, I will email it to the editors at *Develop* with an open source application called Mozilla Thunderbird, and when the next issue comes out, I'll surf over to the *Develop* site with a third open source application, Mozilla Firefox.

Then I'll download the PDF version and read it with Adobe Reader, which isn't open source at all – but I'm sure there's an open source PDF reader out there somewhere.

This raises the question: why aren't there professional quality open source games? Is it the expense? That doesn't seem likely, as Microsoft undoubtedly spent more in developing the Office suite that includes Word, Excel, Access, and PowerPoint than most game developers spend in developing their games. And yet, the open source and shareware games floating around the Internet seldom rival even the casual games that cost less than £75,000 apiece to develop.

Is it the size of the development teams? After all, every ten years the number of team members required to develop a professional game is increasing by an order of magnitude. And yet, the list of credits for OpenOffice actually run longer than those for *Wrath of the Lich King*; those for the various flavours of the open source operating system Linux are longer yet. And although games are undoubtedly technologically complex, they're hardly as vast as the aforementioned operating systems.

While there are a number of open source game development tools such as Ogre3D and NeoAxis Engine, the sad state of open source games is reflected in the fact that the SourceForge Community Choice Award winner of Best Project for Gamers was XBMC, a media player and entertainment hub. This seems rather strange, especially since gamers have been enthusiastically engaged in modding everything from *Quake* to *Total War* for more than ten years now.

So, does this mean that the next explosion in gaming will be in open source games? I don't think so, and the list of credits on the Ogre3D page hints at why. The ten core team members are a diverse lot, and are located everywhere from Guernsey to the United States, the Netherlands, and China. They are, however, all programmers. That's to be expected in a 3D engine team, but by the looks of most of the open source games, their teams primarily consist of programmers as well. In professional game credits, on the other hand, the programmers tend to be heavily outnumbered by the various 2D and 3D artists.

What is the difference for this imbalance? Are programmers more altruistic than artists? Are they more entrepeneurial? Is there some sort of fundamental left brain/right brain dichotomy? These things may all be possible, but it's more likely that the two most important distinctions lie in the areas of employment opportunity and operational environment.

For all that many programming jobs have been exported overseas, programmers still remain eminently employable. A programmer's skills usually translate well from one industry to another; a coder capable of writing 3D engine code will find it easy to write device drivers or web applications even if he has to learn a new programming language. These jobs are not as highly paid as they once were, but they are certainly a living wage, and the programmer whose skills are underutilised in his day job is quite likely to find satisfaction in working on an unpaid programming project in spheres that are closer to his areas of interest.

> **"Open source and shareware games seldom rival even casual games that cost less than £75,000..."**

Artists, on the other hand, tend to make rather less money on average, and very few can afford the time to be creating game art for free. They're often freelancers and need to spend as much of their productive time on paying work. Although progressional game artists are often very well paid, they are already fully occupied with producing game art and involvement with an open source project would likely be in violation of their employment contract. Moreover, artists tend to work alone, for the most part, rather than as part of a collaborative process. While game art must mesh well together in terms of the overall appearance, most of the individual pieces are capable of standing alone in a way that simply doesn't hold true of C code.

In summary, programmers are more accustomed to working together on projects and can afford to do so for long periods of time without being compensated. Furthermore, art tends to retain its value much longer than code, which is quickly outdated, so an artist is going to be somewhat more reluctant about releasing his work under one of the GNU licenses since there's always a chance that he might be able to sell his work in the future even if there's no immediate market for it.

It is the art factor that inhibits the development of professional open source games, and because there is no sign that the underlying aspects will change anytime soon, it appears highly unlikely that the game industry will face the open source software challenge currently being faced by the makers of other software applications.

The Alpenwolf is a professional game designer who has been active in the industry for 17 years and designed games for some of the largest American and Japanese publishers. He has been known to visit Ironforge in the company of a large white wolf. design@alpenwolf.com

merry christmas

and a big thank you

to all the staff at

gusto games

cheers!

GUSTO GAMES
banbury · derby

www.gustogames.com
100% independent

THE DEALS

MINDFUSE SIGNS ENGINE
Californian developer MindFuse has signed up to use Simutronics' HeroEngine online game platform for its 'advanced-casual' MMO *Gatheryn*. Having chosen the toolset, Mindfuse's team, which has a head count of just thirty people, expects to release its game in the first half of 2009.
www.midnfusegames.com

MASSIVE
As well as appointing JJ Richards as a new boss, Microsoft's advertising company has signed an 18-game deal with Activision to include in-game advertising in titles like *Guitar Hero: World Tour*. A second deal with Blizzard has been signed to assist with Battle.net which will not include in-game ads.
www.massiveincorporated.com

EA ACQUIRES J2MSOFT
J2MSoft, the free-to-play specialist, has signed a deal with EA to offer the American publisher an in-road into the highly lucrative Asian online gaming sector. "This is a significant step in EA's strategic plan," said the publisher's president in Asia Jon Neirmann.
www.electronicarts.co.uk

ACONY SNAPS UP PROFX
Independent studio Acony has confirmed that it is using Allegorithmic's procedural texturing tool ProFX in the development of its upcoming free-to-play online multiplayer shooter *Parabellum*. "By using ProFX we could increase the amount of high-quality content and optimise the download size," said Acony's Frank Trigub.
www.acony-games.xg1.net

CRAZYBOX AQUIRED
NDOORS, the developer of *Atlantica Online*, has aquired fellow Korean company CrazyBox Entertainment. The move will allow NDOORS to use Crazybox's FPS technology in forthcoming shooter releases.
www.ndoors.com/eng

BLUE FANG GAMES
North American independent developer Blue Fang Games has opted to use Hansoft's production managemnent toolset. Hansoft CEO Patric Palm said his company were 'excited' to be providing Blue Fang with its technology.
www.bluefang.com

DEVELOPER CHART

(26TH OCTOBER TO 22ND NOVEMBER)

1

↑

LAST MONTH **70**

TREYARCH

BEST SELLING GAME:
CALL OF DUTY: WORLD AT WAR

With Infinity Ward developing the previous *Call of Duty* to great acclaim, the pressure was on Treyarch to follow up with a release to rival *Modern Warfare's* slick game design. Defying cynical gamers' expectations, the studio has obviously satisfied the public, keeping Nintendo from the top spot.

PS3, XB360, PC, Wii

2

→←

LAST MONTH **2**

NINTENDO

BEST SELLING GAME:
MARIO KART WII

Despite some of Nintendo's early DS and Wii titles continuing to occupy the chart, the developer has had to endure an unheard of two months away from the top spot. Perhaps *Wii Fit* has become a victim of its own success and the entire nation has become supremely healthy superbeings.

Wii

3

↑

LAST MONTH **61**

EPIC GAMES

BEST SELLING GAME:
GEARS OF WAR 2

The finger of blame often hovers in the face of the Xbox 360, pointing at the sheer volume of butch space marine-themed shooters. Regardless, it is obvious that Microsoft fans can't get enough of gravelly voices and oversized body armour, as Epic's *Gears of War 2* goes a long way towards proving.

XB360

4

↓

LAST MONTH **1**

EA CANADA

BEST SELLING GAME:
FIFA 09

This year EA Canada has proved that *FIFA* can wow the critics as well as the retailers, having breathed new life into the long-running series. In the ongoing extra time battle between *FIFA* and *Pro Evo*, it seems that this year EA's tribute to the beautiful game has taken the lead from its rival.

PS3, PS2, PSP, PC, Wii, XB360

5

↑

LAST MONTH **76**

BETHESDA

BEST SELLING GAME:
FALLOUT 3

Pushing its creator an astonishing 71 places up the chart, Bethesda's *Fallout 3* has clearly captured the imagination of the game buying public. As the studio's first title since the most recent *Elder Scrolls* game, the post-apocalyptic shooter gives the American company reason to feel confident.

PS3, PC, XB360

OUR MONTHLY RANKING OF THE WORLD'S STUDIOS BASED ON UK GAMES SALES

CHART KEY

NEW	NEW ENTRY	⬆	UP
		⬇	DOWN
🟥	INDEPENDENT	➡⬅	NO MOVE

		LAST MONTH				
6	⬇	3	**KONAMI DIGITAL ENT**	PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2009	PS3, PC, XB360	🇯🇵
7	➡⬅	7	**UBISOFT MONTREAL**	FAR CRY II	PS3, PC, XB360	🇨🇦
8	⬆	5	**TRAVELLER'S TALES**	LEGO BATMAN: THE VIDEO GAME	PS3, PS2, PSP, PC, XB360, WII, DS	🇬🇧
9	NEW	-	**SPORTS INTERACTIVE**	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2009	PC, PSP	🇬🇧
10	⬆	59	**YUKE'S**	WWE SMACKDOWN VS RAW 2009	PS3,PS2, PSP, WII, DS, XB360	🇯🇵
11	⬆	74	**BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT**	WOW: WRATH OF LICH KING	PC	🇺🇸
12	NEW	-	**LEVEL 5**	PROFESSOR LAYTON	DS	🇯🇵
13	⬇	6	**LIONHEAD STUDIOS**	FABLE II	XB360	🇺🇸
14	⬆	13	**SEGA**	MARIO & SONIC AT THE OLYMPIC GAMES	WII, DS	🇯🇵
15	⬇	11	**EA REDWOOD SHORES**	MYSIMS KINGDOM	DS, WII	🇺🇸
16 🟥	NEW	-	**MEDIA MOLECULE**	LITTLEBIGPLANET	PS3	🇬🇧
17	⬆	20	**NEVERSOFT**	GUITAR HERO: WORLD TOUR	PS3, XB360	🇺🇸
18	⬆	27	**VICARIOUS VISIONS**	GUITAR HERO: WORLD TOUR	Wii, DS	🇺🇸
19	⬆	44	**EA BLACK BOX**	NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERCOVER	PS3, PSP, PC, XB360	🇨🇦
20	⬇	10	**NAMCO**	FAMILY TRAINER	Wii	🇯🇵

Chart Comment

The past month has been one of huge leaps up the chart for several developers, who have all proved that a single game can boost their rankings by an enormous amount.

Bethesda has enjoyed the most significant clamber to the dizzy hights of the top five in the past week, climbing a truly impressive 71 places thanks to multiplatform first-person shooter *Fallout 3*.

Epic Games, meanwhile, has *Gears of War 2* to thank for a 58 place increase in chart standing, which demonstrates the impact a single-platform exclusive can have on a studio's commercial fortune.

The real winner this month is Treyarch – not only has the development house proved the cynics wrong by creating a game that truly rivals the quality of Infinity Ward's *Call of Duty: Modern Warfare* with sequel *World at War*, but it has held Nintendo from its normal place in the number one slot, replacing last month's chart topper *FIFA 09*. The battle to cap the charts was incredibly close, but Treyarch claimed victory by a fraction.

> **"The battle to cap the charts was incredibly close..."**

Lower down Sports Interactive's *Football Manager* is the highest new entry this month, proving there's still life in both the PC and PSP markets for the right product.

Elsewhere new entries *Professor Layton* and *LittleBigPlanet* show just how well original IP can do, with the latter coming as a welcome boon to the reputation of UK indie developers.

Will Freeman
will.freeman@intentmedia.co.uk

CHART DATA EXCLUSIVELY SUPPLIED BY

Chart *Track*	**ELSPA**
charttrack.co.uk	elspa.com

amBX brings your games to life

Come and join the revolution
www.ambx.com

amBX

WINNER: Zoe Mode London

2. Sarassin

3. Curve Studios

4. OPM

5. Microsoft Game Studios Europe

6. Firefly Studios

PEPPERMINT
PIMPS

7. Peppermint P

8. amBX Team A

9. AirPlay

10. Splash Damage

THE DEVELOP QUIZ

On December 10th, the cream of London's development scene gathered at the AKA Bar for our inaugural Develop Quiz. We take a look back at the winners (and losers)…

Sponsors

qantm college – Silver Sponsor
amBX – Silver Sponsor
bluegfx – Round Sponsor
Perforce Software – Round Sponsor

The Final Scores

1.	**Zoe Mode London**	**60**
2.	Sarassin	60
3.	Curve Studios	55
4.	OPM Response	55
5.	Microsoft	54
6.	Firefly Studios	54
7.	Peppermint P	53
8.	amBX Team A	52
9.	AirPlay	50
10.	Splash Damage	49
11.	Sheridans	48
12.	Bad Management	48
13.	Perforce	47
14.	Air Edel	45
15.	Big Head Games	44
16.	Amiqus	43
17.	Mediatonic	41
18.	High Score Productions	40
19.	BlueGFX	38
20.	amBX Team B	33
21.	Zeus Technology	32

11. Sheridans

12. Bad Management

AND THE WINNER IS…

13. Perforce

14. Air Edel

15. Big Head Games

BIG HEAD GAMES

16. Amiqus

17. Mediatonic

18. High Score Productions

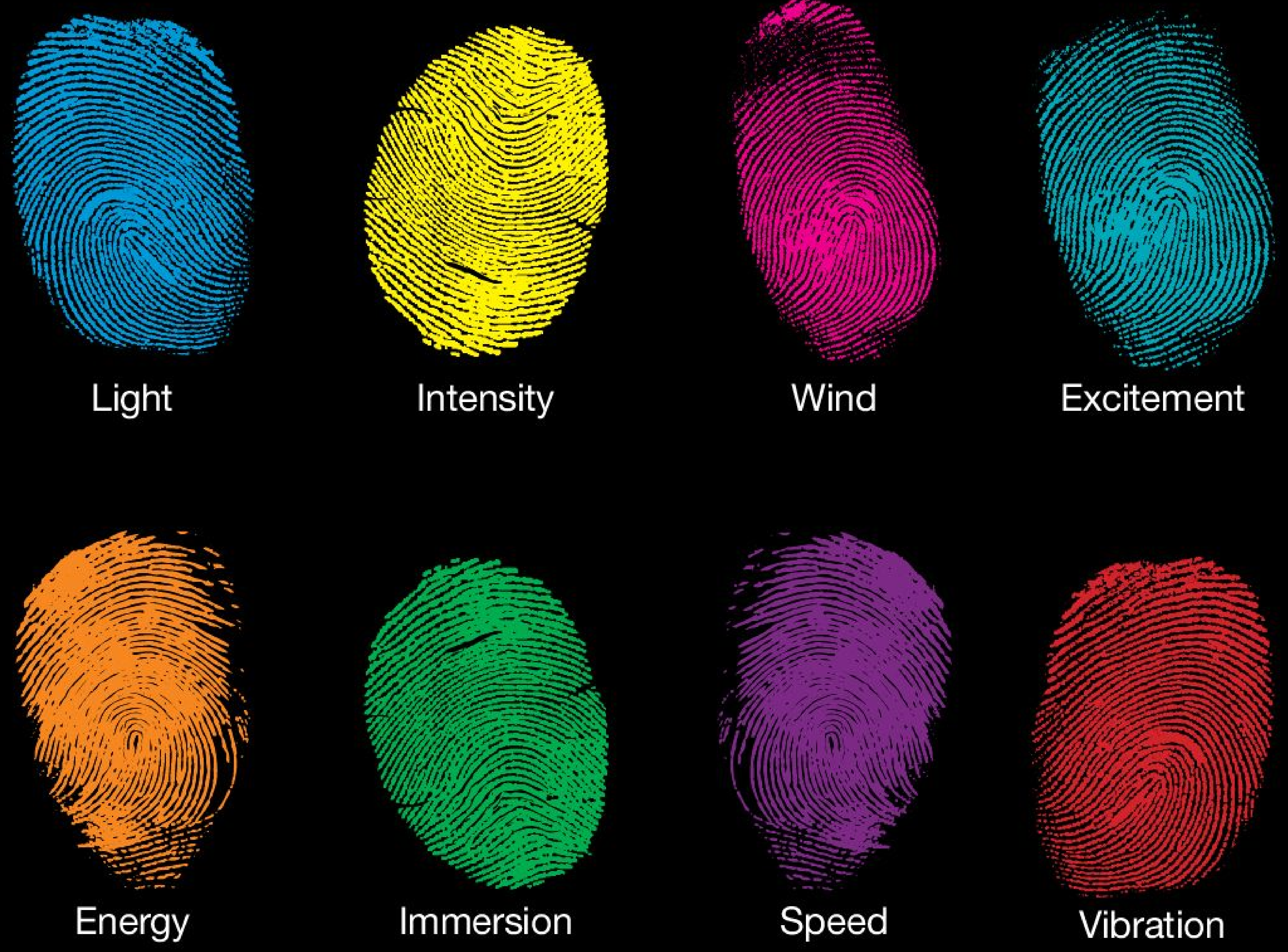
19. BlueGFX

20. amBX Team B

21. Zeus

Creativity
at your fingertips

SDK free to use. Download now.
Visit our new microsite http://developer.ambx.com


Light
Intensity
Wind
Excitement
Energy
Immersion
Speed
Vibration

The new and unique SDK gives game developers the power to realise a totally immersive experience. With the amBX range of APIs, tools, applications, guidelines, dedicated website and our first class support forum, it has never been easier to integrate amBX creatively into your software.

amBX

BETA

DEVELOPMENT FEATURES, INTERVIEWS, ESSAYS & MORE

> "Developers don't know how to integrate writers with the team…"
> Rhianna Pratchett, p26

Apple's gunning for games

p34

London Studios' Homecoming

p38

Secrets for Monumental growth

p56

London calling

Fashion, music, theatre – and now a world centre for games, too? We take a look at the capital's burgeoning development community, p45

DayOne
One day, *you'll* make the perfect career move...
Start your Search www.dayonesearch.com

Writers' Block

With gamers and specialist press putting more emphasis on stories in games, it's now the norm to work with a writer during the development process. **Ed Fear** picked five of the UK's top games writers to talk about where we've come, and how far we still have to go…

Do you think that gamers have come around to the idea of stories in games recently?

Rhianna Pratchett: I don't think it's gamers – players have always been happy to have stories in games, because it drives gameplay, it gives motivation and meaning to what they're doing. It's been the developers and publishers that have come around to having a better story to hold the game together, and hiring a professional writer to do that.

Maurice Suckling: I'd basically agree, with some caveats. It depends on the developer, and the kind of game as well, but that attitude seems more Western – in Japan there's never been any aversion to story.

Justin Villiers: I think it's taking some time for developers to catch up and realise how early on it's necessary to be thinking about story rather than an afterthought.

MS: Yeah, and the playing field is levelling technologically – in broad terms, everybody's got a good engine, so the differential becomes stories and that motivation in gameplay.

Jim Swallow: I think the point about story coming in early is an important one. The biggest problem that we have is when you've delivered a project that's nearly finished, and they suddenly realise they need a story right at the last minute. Developers are, thankfully, wising up to the idea that embedding a writer from day one is a much better idea for everyone.

Are you still finding yourself asked to work on last-minute projects?

JS: Oh, yeah. I've worked on three projects this year – on one of them I was brought in before a single bit of code had been written, and it was great to have that blank slate to start from. With *Deus Ex 3*, I was brought on when the storyline had already been developed, but there was a still a lot of room to manouver. But there was a project at the beginning of the year where it was practically finished, and they'd already written a script that needed a lot of work.

MS: Asking you to bolt the door when there's not even a smell of the horse left behind is by far and away the more usual scenario. Occasionally you get clients that bring you in at the beginning, but you don't necessarily have to stay on the whole time – you might come in and

WHO'S WHO

Maurice Suckling
One-third of the Mustard Corporation, which has worked on around 30 titles, including the *Driver* series, *Broken Sword*, and upcoming DS game *Unsolved Crimes.*

Justin Villiers
A freelance scriptwriter at Sidelines, with a background in television and film. Worked on *Just Cause 2* and cut-scene dialogue for the cancelled *Eight Days*.

Jim Swallow
Writer-for-hire who has previously written for novels, TV and radio. Games-wise, he wrote *Battlestar Galactica*, and has most recently been involved with *Deus Ex 3*.

Rhianna Pratchett
A former games journalist who started scriptwriting and narrative design six years ago, and has recently worked on *Heavenly Sword*, *Overlord* and *Mirror's Edge*.

Tom Jubert
A games writer for around three years, his work has largely been focused on indie titles – most predominantly with Frictional Games on the *Penumbra* series.

do a bit for a few days and then not speak to them for six months. If you only come in at the beginning and steer the rudder a little bit, the whole process is going to work out much better for everyone.

RP: There's a tendency to put writers in boxes – I think far more developers are aware of the need for writers but they don't really know how to integrate them into the team, and it's like, 'Orders go in the box, and words come out of it. The writer will not be integrated into the team for fear of affecting their work.' That's really how it happens – I've been on projects where I haven't seen the game! So it's a good thing that developers are realising the need for stories; it's a good thing that they're realising that you need professionals to do it – but they don't really know how to use them, how to integrate them with a team.

MS: I think that's because of the misconception that all writers do is dialogue. If you believe that stories are carried in dialogue, you allow writers to come in and do their thing, but not something that affects the game more. But once you accept that stories are carried in structure, you can bring people in in a deeper, more multi-dimensional way that allows things to develop. If you get a writer in to just do dialogue, it's using about two per cent of what it is that we do.

JV: I think what holds it back is that there's a hierarchy within most development companies, and in a lot of situations there'll a producer or a lead animator and the game is almost like their baby, so they want to continue with that all the way to the end – but then they get to the dialogue, and they think 'let's get a writer to do this', not seeing the writer as someone who can add anything to the story. That's kind of the reverse of the film industry, where it all starts from the script.

> **"If you get a writer in to just do dialogue, it's using about two per cent of what it is that we do..."**

Tom Jubert: I think that's a real difficulty. If you want to create a decent narrative experience, a lot of the time you're making demands on the gameplay to tell that story – and at the same time, those working on the gameplay just want the story to support what they're doing. I've been lucky enough to be involved in the start for all the *Penumbra* games, but I still have the problem of trying to get the guys doing the level and puzzle design to fit their stuff in with the story and vice versa.

JS: You get a great synergy when you get when you put creative people in a room together. Just being in a room with some of the art guys or level design guys on *Deus Ex 3* has made us come up with ideas, just from the fact that you're all together – and that makes the product better. Compartmentalisation is terrible, because you lose that.

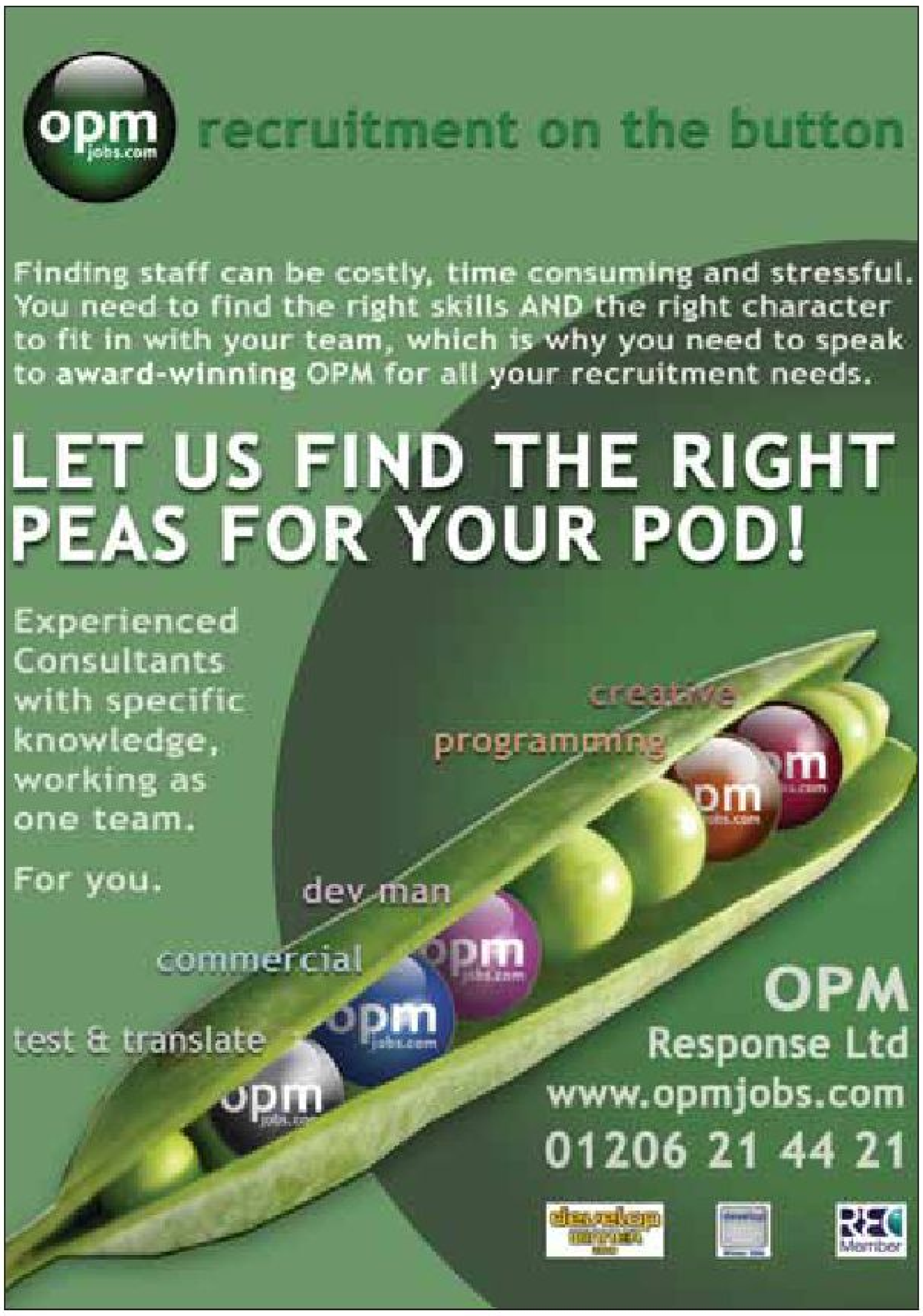
RP: With *Overlord* I wasn't brought in right at the beginning, but by just talking to the level designers, animators, cutscene people you can get them enthused about the story. You can't always be there to protect the story, but you can

RAZORBACK DEVELOPMENTS

SPECIALISTS IN HANDHELD GAMES

Recruiting Talent Now

SEND YOUR CV AND WORK TO JOBS@RAZORBACK.CO.UK
WWW.RAZORBACK.CO.UK



opm jobs.com recruitment on the button

Finding staff can be costly, time consuming and stressful. You need to find the right skills AND the right character to fit in with your team, which is why you need to speak to award-winning OPM for all your recruitment needs.

LET US FIND THE RIGHT PEAS FOR YOUR POD!

Experienced Consultants with specific knowledge, working as one team.

For you.

creative
programming
dev man
commercial
test & translate

OPM
Response Ltd
www.opmjobs.com
01206 21 44 21

REC Member

New Year, New Start, New Job?

Senior Animator
$Excellent + Benefits + Relocation
Quebec, Canada DS2757SA

LONGTAIL STUDIOS

Longtails' success to date has primarily been in mobile gaming, but they are looking to move into handheld then console gaming, and are looking for a number of industry experienced staff to lead this transition. The Senior Animator will be in charge of working with the Art Director to lead and participate in the creation and implementation of animation, while keeping to the projects tone. Full spec available on request.

Email dan@aswift.com

Artists x 8
AU$ Excellent plus benefits and relocation
Brisbane, Australia DS790A

TANTALUS

Tantalus have a great reputation and a solid history within the games industry - in all they have released over twenty titles, usually built around big license properties and always with the world's leading publishers. They are currently looking to bring on board a number of experienced artists for a new project at their second studio. More details available on request.

Email dan@aswift.com

Senior/Executive Producer
€Excellent plus great benefits and relocation
Frankfurt, Germany SH1144EP

CRYTEK

Crytek are looking for a 'AAA' quality Executive Producer to manage the production of a high profile title. You should have previous experience as Producer/Senior Producer on a multi-platform title, have the proven ability to produce high quality, top selling games, and the ability to support and drive the creative vision across multiple projects. Full spec available on request.

Email simon@aswift.com

bight™ GAMES

Senior Programmers x 2
$Excellent + Benefits + Relocation
Charlottetown, Canada HH2354F

Bight Games create compelling, original mobile content for Java, Brew and iPhone handsets. This small but fiercely talented team of game developers live and breathe games.

Excellent opportunity for two Java or C++ programmers who want to:-

- Have direct input into the development of original games
- See games developed from start to finish
- Be part of a small, creative team
- Develop in a quickly emerging sector
- Live and work in a fantastic location with a great quality of life

Interested? Get in touch with hollie@aswift.com for more information.

Web www.aswift.com Tel 01709 876877

Aardvark Swift Recruitment Silicon House, Farfield Park,
Rotherham, South Yorkshire S63 5DB

Aardvark Swift

almost deputise it so that people there care about it, care about how it's told in their level and what it adds. If you can get them enthused and coming up with their own ideas, that's something I see as really important.

But if you never meet level designers and you're just kept in a box, you don't know if what you're doing is working properly, or if it's pissing people off because you don't know their needs. So integration is the key, and there needs to be a hell of a lot more communication on both sides. Now, on *Overlord 2*, I almost have a mini-team who are almost like guardians of the story, and can know it when I'm not around on a day-to-day basis.

It's great that there's narrative designers in-house at some companies now, but there's not enough. A lot of what I do is narrative design, and a lot of what I do is – as Maurice said – like building the house.

There's been a rise in the number of studios employing narrative designers, certainly in the US, but it's not caught on quite as much here. The definition tends to change from person to person, so – as people who do some narrative design – how would you define it, and how do you think it could improve the process?

JS: A narrative designer brings a larger set of tools to the job, so it's not just 'here's a script for the barks,' it's more a question of saying 'I can help you design back stories'; the invisible things that Rhianna was just talking about. You can scope them out, and then the artists can take that out and construct an informed design for the character. The narrative designer can bring that sort of texture to the game, and really raise the reality of it I guess.

JV: Really, storytelling is structure – it's just as important as characters or dialogue. I think the narrative designer is aware of taking the player on a journey – that's an important aspect. It's the responsibility for them to think of the journey, and what the player will be feeling at certain points.

MS: For me, a narrative designer ascribes the space in which the story will be told, and the way in which it will be delivered, and the nature of the relationship between that story and the rest of the game. It's not necessarily what a screenplay writer would do.

I think you're right in that each person has their own definition – for me, the back story stuff wouldn't necessarily be something a narrative designer did. I mean, the difference between story and plot is that plot is the way the story is manifested. In a novel, maybe you use flashbacks or flashforwards, various other narrative voice techniques. In games, the biggest thing that you do is work out the sort of space you're going to play in – and that's the critical thing, I think.

> ***"Narrative design is a real craft – it brings audio, design and art together…"***

Do you think the narrative designers can act as a bridge between an external writer and the development team?

RP: Yeah. Narrative designers should be involved with, or at least have a tentacle in, all of the different ways that stories can be told through a game. Story can be told through gameplay, like in *Psychonauts*, or it can be told through the environment – which is really big at the moment. That might, in a way, be completely done by an artist, but a narrative designer or writer can come up with techniques that will help the player take in a story without being told it.

I think that's a real craft, and there's so many different ways of doing it in a game that are a lot more complicated than other mediums. It crosses over with other departments. It's bringing audio, design, artists together. In some ways, I consider myself more of a narrative designer than a writer, because working in games metamorphosises writing into so much more.

JV: I think one of the unique abilities of games is the potential to tell a non-linear story. It allows writers to use their imaginations in different ways, and come up with new ways of telling stories. The narrative designer has a special responsibility to be pushing the boundaries of how to tell a story itself. Hopefully game developers will be looking at using narrative designers more.

MS: As game writers, we don't just tell stories – it's really about how we provide the possibility of people telling their own stories. If you're writing a screenplay, the mantra is 'Show, don't tell.' But if you're working in games, maybe there's a different hierarchy – maybe it's do, then show, then tell.

RP: I think *Bioshock* has been the best example so far in terms of its doing, showing and telling – I don't think you know right until in the end just how much 'doing' is involved – but in terms of environmental storytelling, it dripped from every single room, the positioning of characters, where you found the bodies. For the player that cares about that, you can go around the world seeing little bits and pieces of story everywhere you go. I think that was a really slick way of doing it, and it sold really well, and that's made people set up and take notice.

JV: It was kind of a benchmark, really, and what it did very cleverly is that it allowed the game to be played by just charging through or, if players wanted to indulge in the story, it was there. It balanced it perfectly, and created many new ways of delivering exposition into a game.

TJ: I'd argue that *Half-Life* and its sequel did that a lot better. If you look at *Bioshock*, there's still a shed-load of text and speech telling the story. In *Half-Life* especially, there's no text, very little voice work, and yet people still come away from the game with the sense that they've experienced a story, and that's done entirely through the levels, the settings.

JS: There's a great bit at the beginning of *Half-Life 2* where you see a Vortigaunt – which were incredibly dangerous characters from the first game – and it's pushing a broom like a janitor. What does that inform you? That the threat here in the sequel is so powerful that it's reduced biggest threat from the first game into being a janitor. That's a huge chunk of story exposition dropped in front of you without a word of dialogue. That sort of environmental storytelling is the sort of thing we can only contribute if we're embedded in the project from the get-go.

JV: There's a kind of notion in the press that the cutscene is dead; that we can potentially move forward from that as an industry. Hopefully, the

more writers that are brought in to the industry, the less cutscenes we'll need – because personally, I think the medium of games is much better without them.

There was a period where it seemed fashionable to bash the cutscene. What are your views as writers?

RP: People don't hate cutscenes, they hate bad cutscenes, ones that are badly written, badly timed and come too soon after other cutscenes. I don't think the cutscene is dead, I think it just needs to evolve a little bit more. It's probably the place where the immaturity that the medium has had in the storytelling space has shown – which isn't surprising, given it's still young. I don't think anybody minds a well done, well-timed cutscene that doesn't interrupt gameplay.
JV: I disagree – I think that there's a lot of gamers that hate cutscenes.
TJ: I think it's a matter of principle. We're a medium that's all about interactivity, and cutscenes defeat that point. It serves a purpose, but I don't think it's a purpose we should be pursuing.
MS: I think there are times in which they serve a function. If, in order to set up three hours of tremendously exciting motivated gameplay, you need a fourty-second cutscene, and that's the best way of doing it, then to me that's fine. I think it's dangerous to have a mantra of 'no cutscenes,' because there may come a point where you need them. I'm not saying we should be using them all the time, but I'm not saying you should throw them away.
JS: I agree with Maurice – it's the right tool for the right job. What a cutscene does is immediate delivery of information to the player. Ideally what we want to do is to deliver that information seamlessly – but unfortunately in a game you can't always do that, and it may be the only way of delivering certain data.
JV: There's a particular developer which is specifically working on the technology to have interactive cutscenes. They partly exist today, but I think that'll solve the problem.
JS: But when you give the player the agency to do whatever they want, you can't trust them to be in the right place to listen to the story. So how do you set up the environment to make sure that the data is delivered to the player without forcing it on them?
TJ: Cutscenes are kind of an unpleasant necessity at the moment, but I think with time that'll go. It's a bit like voice-over narrations at the beginning of films. If you go back in time, all films started with this massive narration to set the scene – but as the medium progressed, people realised that you can show it instead.
MS: But there are still some times when you absolutely want that still. I just don't think it's as straightforward as that. *American Beauty* is an example of where that was used stylistically but beautifully. It's horses for courses, the right tool for the right job.
TJ: Yeah, but I don't think cutscenes are used stylistically – I think they're used because it's the only way they know how to do it.
RP: I think Westwood's use of them in the *Command and Conquer* series was always pretty stylistic, as were the *Wing Commander* games with Mark Hamill. This is another argument for having writers and narrative designers in from the start – you really have to design structure so well to be able to tell a story without cutscenes, or with very few, or with interactive ones. It's a really high bar for developers to reach, and I think the cutscene, while it has become overused, definitely can be blended with other storytelling techniques.
TJ: It's a crutch!

> *"Gamers don't hate cutscenes – they hate badly written, badly timed cutscenes…"*

So on the other end of the scale, there are quite a lot of people with grand ideas about games where people tell their own stories. Do you think that's viable?

JS: I think the truth is that most people want to be told stories. If you want to make up your own story, why play a game? Why not write your own book? When you come to a game environment, you want to be part of it, you want to experience it. You don't want to have to walk in and do all the work yourself. I think that in open-world situations, there's definitely the need for a strong story skeleton that players can then hang their own experience on.
JV: I think it's a little bit of a myth that a player only wants to create their own stories. Imagine if *GTA IV* had no overarching narrative and you just did whatever you wanted – people would be dissatisfied, I think they need the guidance. It's escapism, it's putting yourself into someone else's shoes.

Finally, what would you suggest to help improve the synergy of story and game, of writers and developers?

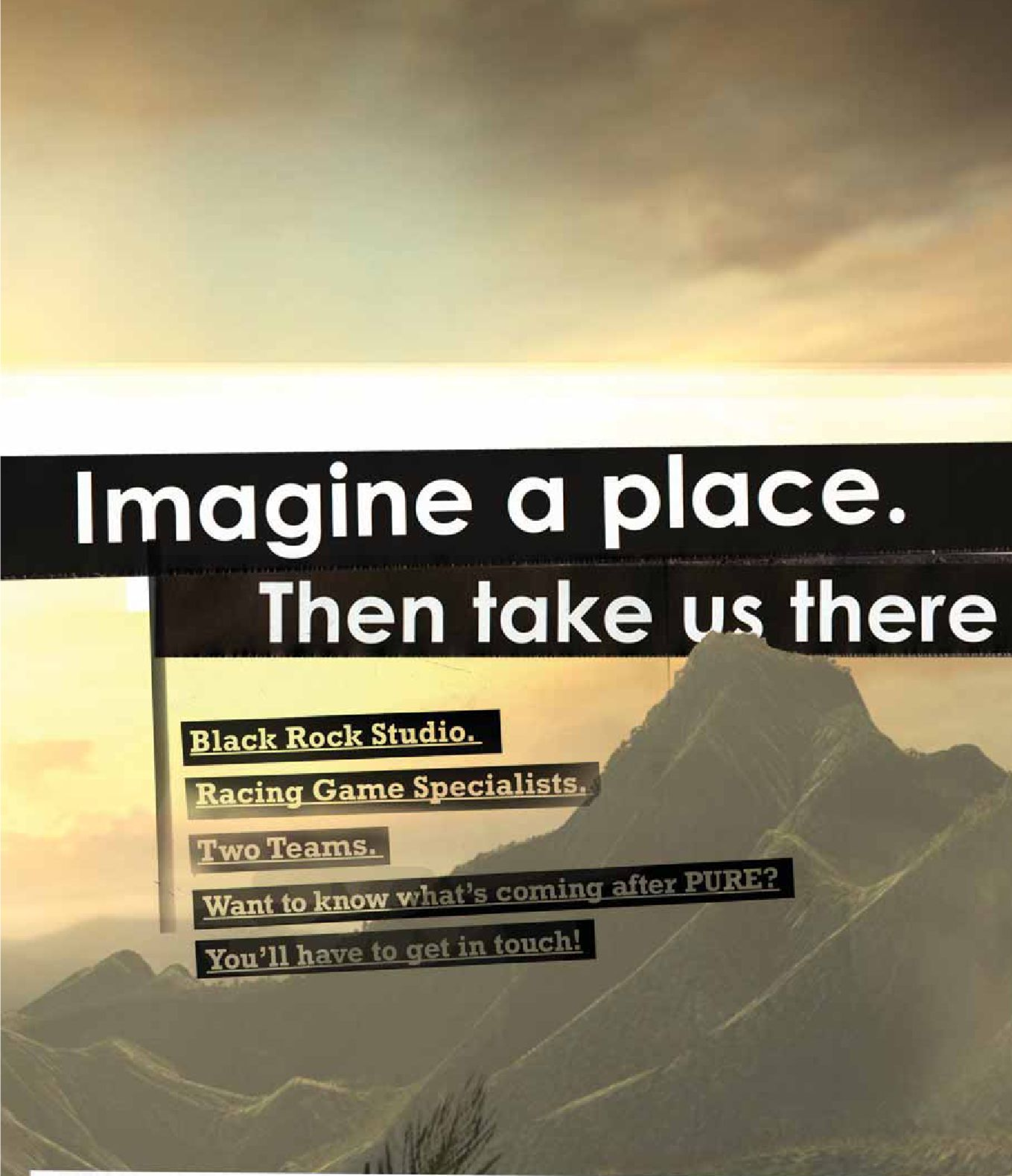
JV: I think we're often brought in too late in the day to improve games, so starting at the top and being involved at that initial stage.
RP: Better integration throughout the whole project – making sure you keep that writer up until the very end, even if it's just a few days here

and there. In the last few months of project hell, when everyone's flapping and they're just trying to get things done, there's nobody there making sure the story's intact; it's probably far from people's minds. Having someone there at the end still holding on to the narrative strings is really important.

And, as I've mentioned, better integration into the team: letting writers talk to artists and designers and come up with ideas. Just general integration – I think there's a lot developers could learn from writers and a lot that writers could learn from developers about what is needed and how they can best serve the project. A writer can be a very valuable member of a team when they're allowed to be.
JS: I'd agree with all of that - I'd ask developers to try and learn to understand what a writer can bring to the party – bring them in early, integrate them into the team, but learn what they've got to offer you. In the end, having another creative person in the room is just going to make things better. If you've got someone who knows games, and who knows writing, they can bring an extra level of energy into the project which can make a good game great.
RP: Oh, and more time! Developers often underestimate how long it takes to write.
JS: Accreditation, too – every time I work on a game project, I have to remind them to give me a credit. As writers, we live and die by the work that we do.

Audiomotion™
studios
ITS TIME TO
JOIN THE
MOVEMENT
www.audiomotion.com

www.audiomotion.com
info@audiomotion.com
+44 (0) 8701 600 504



Imagine a place.
Then take us there

Black Rock Studio.

Racing Game Specialists.

Two Teams.

Want to know what's coming after PURE?

You'll have to get in touch!

Vacancies include:

Technical VFX Animators
Lead Technical Artist
Senior Technical Artist (Core Technology Group)
Lead VFX Artist
Producers
Graphics Programmers
Tools Programmers
Track Designer
Design Director

Apply today at: jobs@distudios.net
For more info visit: www.blackrockstudio.com

BLACKROCK STUDIO
Disney INTERACTIVE STUDIOS

© Disney

2ND
LAP 1/3
iPod

The Big Apple

It's official: Apple is gunning for the games market. **Ed Fear** caught up with Greg Josiwak, head of iPhone and iPod marketing, to find out more…

> "Apple has never hidden the fact that the staggering success of the App Store was a huge surprise to the company…"

For how many years have people been predicting Apple's entrance into the games industry? The argument was semi-persuasive: after unprecedented success in the portable music industry and the radical about-turn of its Mac ranges, the Cupertino giant is now seen as one of the coolest companies around – and, as such, why would it not want to get into what many see as one of the coolest industries around?

Of course, the easy answer is that it has – and the disastrous Pippin is proof of why a company shouldn't stretch itself too far, even if that was an Apple of a different era. But times change, and that prediction has come true, albeit in a slightly roundabout, and possibly unintentional manner. Apple has never hidden the fact that the staggering performance of its iPhone and iPod Touch App Store was a huge surprise to the company, but we'd wager that quite how predominantly games featured in that success was perhaps the most shocking thing of all – especially to a company with a quite public disregard of gaming.

And so, while it might never have intended to, Apple has finally entered the games industry – and with recent promotions focusing on the gaming power of the iPod Touch, it's clear that the company now has dominance of the portable gaming industry clearly within its sights. We sat down with Greg Josiwak, Apple's head of iPhone and iPod marketing, to talk about Apple's new strategy as a games platform holder, and the opportunities that lie therein for developers.

Menu
iPod 9:42 AM
2x
36,310
26
05:43

How important are games now to Apple? The games situation for the previous iPods was certainly a more measured approach compared to what we see now.
Well, that was very different – it was a much more controlled environment for click-wheel iPods. This is a different thing – we've opened up apps, and we've had a lot of takers. That we've accumulated 1,500 games in such a short order is pretty amazing.

It's all in our marketing: we talk about this being 'the funnest iPod ever' – music, movies and games. In our TV advertisements now, we're showing the gaming aspects of it because it's so clear that people want to do that with this product. We've got people playing these games and buying the iPod Touch to play these games. I think it's a tremendous opportunity for us, for our customers, and for developers and publishers.

Do you see the App Store's market as being different to the type of people who would deliberately seek out and enter a specialist games retailer?
I don't have data, but I think that common sense would say that, well, the App Store goes out to every customer – it's on every iPod Touch. It's on every iPhone. So you're hitting the entire space of people with a single tap of a button, all without having to leave their house.

Maybe in the physical world it takes more commitment, because you've got to discover these things, you've got to go to a game store, you've got to pay a significantly bigger amount of money. So maybe that's limiting your base, I don't know – common sense would say that having it out there on every device is an advantage.

You've compared the iPod Touch to the DS – you see yourselves as in that space now? Do you see that as a competitor?
Well, it's not just the screen quality – it's the graphics capability, the compute power, the App distribution model. I had an analyst tell me in September – and he was so right – that the DS is the past of gaming devices, and that the iPod Touch is the future of gaming devices. It certainly has our competitors scrambling in what they're going to do in reaction to this. I think it's a tremendous start that we're having at entering this gaming market, and there's no doubt that that's happening – it just is.

> ***"The iPod Touch is the future of gaming devices. It certainly has our competitors scrambling..."***

Does that mean games are going to be a big part of your iPod marketing going forward?
Certainly with the iPod Touch, we've talked about it being the future of the iPod – the iPod that can go beyond just music. And I think we've been clear with that: this device can play your music, your movies, your games because this product is capable of so much more, and there's a tremendous synergy we have with the iPod Touch customer and the game developers.

The PSP has quite a targeted hardcore audience, and the DS has quite a casual userbase. Where would you position the iPod in that sense?
It represents a more future-looking view of gaming, so maybe it's in a category of its own. There's nothing else that does what it does. It's a very interesting new entrant, and I think that maybe that's a better question for our competitors.

Many developers we've spoken to have been positive about their relations with Apple – obviously you've always had developer relations with your Mac business, but it must be a big increase in the amount of people you're dealing with. Have you put a big focus on those relationships?
That past that you mention is a tremendous strength for us, because we know what it's like to be a platform company. We know what it's like to create tools for developers, we know what it's like to create programmes for developers, to support and evangelise them. This is something we've been doing for the last 25 years, so we have a history that, again, differentiates us from people who are new to it.

Developers have told us that they've been very pleased with the interaction, and also they're happy that we don't say 'Sorry, we don't need that game, because we already have five racing games.'

How much of the current structure of the App Store and the SDK was influenced by the hugely active homebrew scene that appeared?
Well, we had said all along that we had priorities of things that we needed to work on, and we had nothing against the idea of third

AT&T 3G
9:42 AM
Just Added
Staff Favorites
SEGA
MONKEY BALL
ebaY
The Iconfactory
Twitterrific
302 reviews
FREE
Loopt, Inc.
Loopt
500 reviews
FREE
Six Apart
TypePad
235 reviews
FREE
eBay Inc.
eBay
FREE
Featured
Categories
Top 25
Search
Updates

party development of the iPhone. But we had to get some of the basic things right, and when we wanted to create an SDK we wanted to do it right. We wanted to create a great environment with the right set of APIs to give developers the power of the product, and I think we've done it. I think the wait was worth it for those developers, because we've brought that hacker community to the mainstream, bringing it to every customer.

> **"Sega brought their mobile team onto iPhone and they said, 'You know what, this would be better for the console guys'…"**

There was a lot of promotion of *Super Monkey Ball* at the beginning of the App Store – would you be willing to do the same for other games, and would it only be with the big names or big brands?

Super Monkey Ball was somewhat of a unique opportunity, in that Sega was one of the few developers we brought in prior to our March event where we announced the SDK. As a result, they had a little bit of a head start, and they were able to demonstrate the game at that event – and it was amazing how much progress they'd made in just a couple of weeks. Their story was particularly engaging because they brought their mobile team onto it, and they said "You know what, this would be better for the console guys." It was a much richer environment than they were used to.

So certainly, they were one of the early big titles, and they got some airplay as a result. We've been doing that with a number of titles – we have a series of advertisements for the iPhone where we're highlighting Apps. Some of them are games, some of them aren't – it's not about the size of the developer, it's quality of the game. *Cro-Mag Rally* was one that we showed, and that was basically a one-man team. So, it's a matter of the quality of the game, and that's the beauty of the democracy of the App Store: if you create something good, it's going to get good ratings, and if it gets good ratings it's going to get people buying it, and if it gets people buying it it's going to end up on the best-seller list.

Do you think that it opens up opportunities for smaller developers to sustain themselves through self-publishing?

You know the challenges you face in distributing physical goods, like licensing and manufacturing. You've got to worry about forecasting. What if you get it wrong? If you do too many, you've got returns coming back; if you do too few you haven't satisfied demand. And what if you find you've got a bug? You have to pull the product back from the channel. It all adds up for a very expensive proposition for a developer, and as a result game titles are more expensive when in a physical form.

Every customer has the App Store on the device – that means every customer has access to your product. When talking about physical goods, it's hard to get shelf space. So not only are we serving the EAs, the Segas, the Gamelofts, the Hudsons of the world – who are investing nicely in iPod Touch games – but we're also allowing opportunity for the small guy, the one or two developer shop that otherwise couldn't get any sort of placement in a retail environment. We've had a number of cases of small developers who have told us that, after a month or two of their cheques coming in, they've paid off their mortgage.

www.apple.com

FIVE OF THE BEST

Unconvinced of the iPhone's potential for gaming? We've picked out a handful of games that prove its viability…

FIELDRUNNERS
Subatomic Studios
Price: £2.99

Fieldrunners is one of the App Store success stories: a low-budget game released at a bargain price, the game was named one of *Time* magazine's ten games of the year – not bad for a game developed by an engineer at 38 Studios and his friends. Yes, it's yet another tower defence game, but the combination of touch-screen controls and a considered boiling down of the genre's slight bloat of late has put it firmly amongst our favourite games.

AQUA FOREST
Hudson / Prometech
Price: £4.99

Admittedly on the expensive end of the App scale, *Aqua Forest* uses Prometech's OctaveEngine Casual soft-body physics engine for some ingenious puzzling. The framerate might veer into single digits, but it shows how that processing power can be put to use other than just fancy graphics.

THE FORCE UNLEASHED
THQ Wireless
Price: £3.49

The Force Unleashed is a prime example of how iPhone games can look with a huge budget. It might not empirically be the best game available, but it's laudworthy in its use of touch-screen gestures to not only control force powers but even deflect incoming attacks.

ASTEROPE
Niklas Wahrman
Price: £0.59

The perfect example of low-price, high-quality, independent development on the iPhone. It may only have ten (admittedly tough) levels, but it's a unique gaming experience for less than the price of a newspaper, and (don't say it out loud) a hell of a lot more fun.

Tap screen to continue
Umm… I have some cake in the glove compartment.

WORDFREAK
VivekaSoft
Price: £0.59 or free (ad-supported)

Available either for a minimal amount or free if you're willing to put up with some in-game ads, *WordFreak* is simple – guess the five letter word – but somehow oddly compelling, and a perfect example of how a developer can make money outside of the initial App Store purchase.

WordFreak
Prev 5
Next 5
Guess!
SCORE
92
BEST
92
GAMES
1
TOTAL
92

CODEMASTERS™
UK DEVELOPER OF THE YEAR

AAA TEAM. BIG BUDGET. YOUR VISION

NEW ACTION IP

CHIEF GAME DESIGNER

Applications to:
NewAction@codemasters.com

codemasters studios™

© 2008 The Codemasters Software Company Limited ("Codemasters").
All rights reserved. "Codemasters"® is a registered trademark owned
by Codemasters and the Codemasters logo is a trademark of Codemasters.

THEATRE
THEATRE
Bowl

Home Sweet

Having only just launched, Sony's Home is a known quantity for gamers – but what does it really mean for developers? **Ed Fear** sat down with the team behind the project to find out why we should be excited about the possibilties offered by the new social space for PS3 gamers…

Home has been in development for quite a long time now – has the focus changed much over that time?

Mitch Goodwin (lead programmer): Well, I've been on it since day one, four and a half years ago. It's changed a lot. Originally it was a lobby interface for *The Getaway: Black Monday* on PS2 – that was the original goal of it. The decision at the time was that there wasn't enough of a PS2 online userbase to justify it, so we were kind of left to explore and take this idea of a lobby system forward.

We talked about doing an SDK so that other developers could use the system for their own games; give it out to them as a set of libraries.

> *"You'd normally want a pretty clear design at the start, but for Home we're going to be evolving as we get responses…"*

It soon evolved into a committed PS3 standalone project, and we started going towards the idea that we would be a part of the PS3 platform.

It evolved very slowly over a long period of time to get where we are now. We recently found a bit of code which had weapon pickups in it – it was legacy from back in the day when the target was very different. That can be a bit of a bad thing in terms of managing the development of a product: you'd normally want a pretty clear design at the start, but for Home it's essential that we work in that way, because we're going to be evolving as we get beta responses and third parties put in requests.

HARBOUR
STUDIOS
Manage Apartment
Emote
Text Chat

Home

Concept art for a space in Home and, inset, a rare glimpse at how the project started on PS2

Peter Edward (game director): The focus has refined. At the time of GDC last year, there were so many ideas of what it could be – everybody was very excited about the possibilities for it. Our angle for it at the time was that it could do any number of different social and gaming activities.

Since then we've refocused, partly through necessity and partly through recognising our current audience. We have an audience of gamers, so it made sense to focus on that and give something for those guys to latch on to. Besides, there are loads of social networks around with their own strengths – there's no sense in us just trying to replicate all of that. It makes more sense to focus on the strengths of the PS3.

Why should developers be excited?
PE: Well, for one, there's the opportunity to strengthen the relationship with the user.

> *"There are loads of social networks around – there's no sense in us trying to replicate all of that..."*

Traditionally, whether it's an offline or online game, your relationship with the user is restricted to the time that they have that disc in the machine and they're playing it. Fundamentally, it's based around the game and that's it – when they move on to something else, you lose them completely.

With Home, it allows you to maintain that contact. If you've got a game which has a representation within Home as well, and people are going into that space and mixing with other fans of that game, or of that genre, or even of that publisher or developer – the relationship with the developer is way longer than if it's just a one-off hit from a shop. I think all of the opportunities that go along with that are the most exciting thing for a developer.

You have the opportunty to get feedback from users immediately after they play. You have the ability to extend interest with that game, through extending interest in the space, having tournaments, leaderboards – it all extends the appeal of that game beyond the traditional bell-curve. You can promote additional games that you're working on, you can do research into what features people would like, and you've even got creative opportunities to promote that stuff in the first place.

MG: There are lots of different levels for developers to go into it – it's an optional thing.

Above left: The Home team (left to right: James Cox, Peter Edward, Mitch Goodwin)

Above: Home's avatars showing the scope for goth customisation

They could just support game launching, and then it's just a service that helps them get users together and extend the lobby system of the game itself. Then they could do spaces or create objects and items that enhance the gameplay – there's already third parties who are doing things where you can launch games and do things that then reward you back in Home. You can add little bits that aren't huge amounts of work but could enhance the game separately – basically an extension without having to change the game once it's been released.

How has reception been amongst developers?
PE: It's gone through waves. Initially, there was real excitement from people, because we were showing something really different and that had a lot of potential. And then there's the realisation that, well, we probably announced it too early – GDC 07 was a long time ago. I think there was sort of recognition amongst developers of 'Oh, this is interesting, but there's still a lot of work to be done.'

When we talked nitty-gritty to developers and showed them the tools we'd been developing alongside the client, they started to get a little cagey about whether they want to be involved. We're now, however, coming out of that – we've got case studies and examples of work that's been done, we've been through it ourselves internally, we've got agencies that have produced content. The feedback we've been getting is that, in the early days, it was a bit thin on the ground in terms of support and tools, but now it's mature and everybody's starting to produce some really interesting stuff. As soon as developers start seeing what other people have done, it really starts to build on the excitement, and now it's at a really nice stage where people realise that it's not that difficult, and also that the possibilities are pretty vast. So we're back at the exciting stage again.

> ***"We realise we probably announced it too early – GDC '07 was a long time ago…"***

MG: There is an initial reluctance or hesitation – they like the idea but they don't know practically what they can do to benefit. In my experience, you'll have a conversation where you suggest something and they go 'Oh, right, that's quite neat'. And then it's a really nice experience when you see what they come up with.

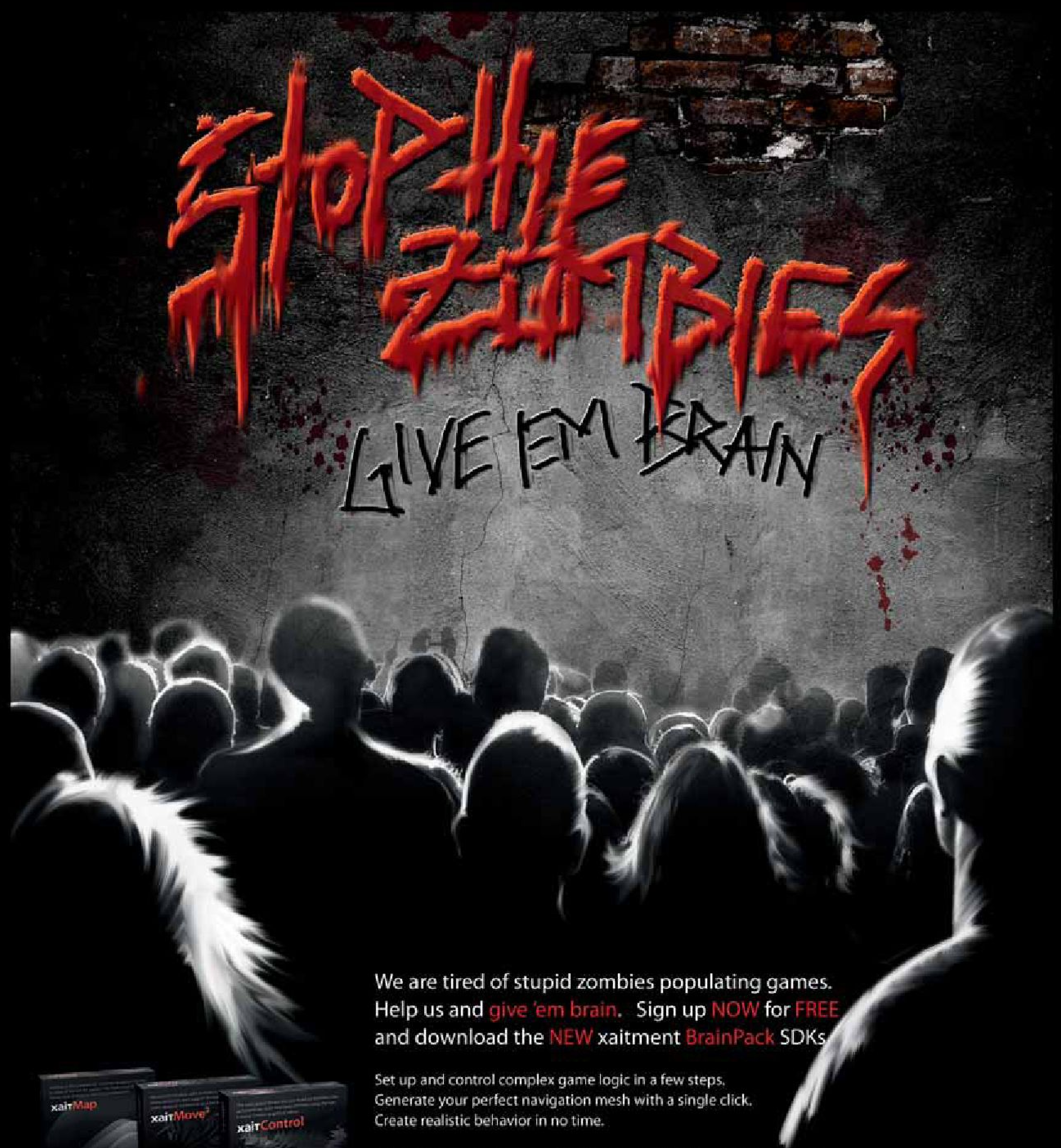
I wonder what that new shop will be?
?
PlayStation Home

What would you say to those who think it's just yet another job for already overburdened developers?
James Cox (senior producer, tools): In terms of extra work, that's a difficult question – you are creating something for a new platform. If you want to have the same content on different platforms, you can do that; you can definitely vary the amount of effort they want to spend. It is still some effort to support Home, but it can be very simple: if you just want to do a few clothing items to advertise your game, you can do that. Development times for making a whole clothing set could be a day or so.

Or, for instance, if you've got a minigame in one your games or a Flash game on a website, you could convert that across to Lua quite quickly – we've seen people knock up 2D arcade games within two weeks or so. But then again, we've seen people make brand new arcade games for Home, spending anywhere between one to three months. It all depends on what you're making. It's not free, but you are making more content for another platform – a software platform – but you can sell it to your key demographic on PS3.

PE: The website thing is an interesting point – it's almost obligatory for a game to have a pre-launch website to drum up interest and promotion. Websites are relatively quick, but they're expensive; it's development that for a large part has to be outsourced because it's a different set of skills. In terms of costs it'd at least be comparable, but you can use internal resources to do it because, largely speaking, it's the same skillset as you're already using. It's a practical way of producing that sort of pre-launch focal point.

Is there the possibility for Home to actually save people time – could developers use it as their online system?
MG: Instead of writing a full lobby system to get users together you could use the community and groups within Home as a way of doing their online services. You can imagine a title that just has an offline component, and the only way to get the online stuff is to go through Home because we get provide that for them. It's pure functionality that developers are getting for free in a sense – although they'd have to do at least some work.



We are tired of stupid zombies populating games.
Help us and give 'em brain. Sign up NOW for FREE
and download the NEW xaitment BrainPack SDKs.

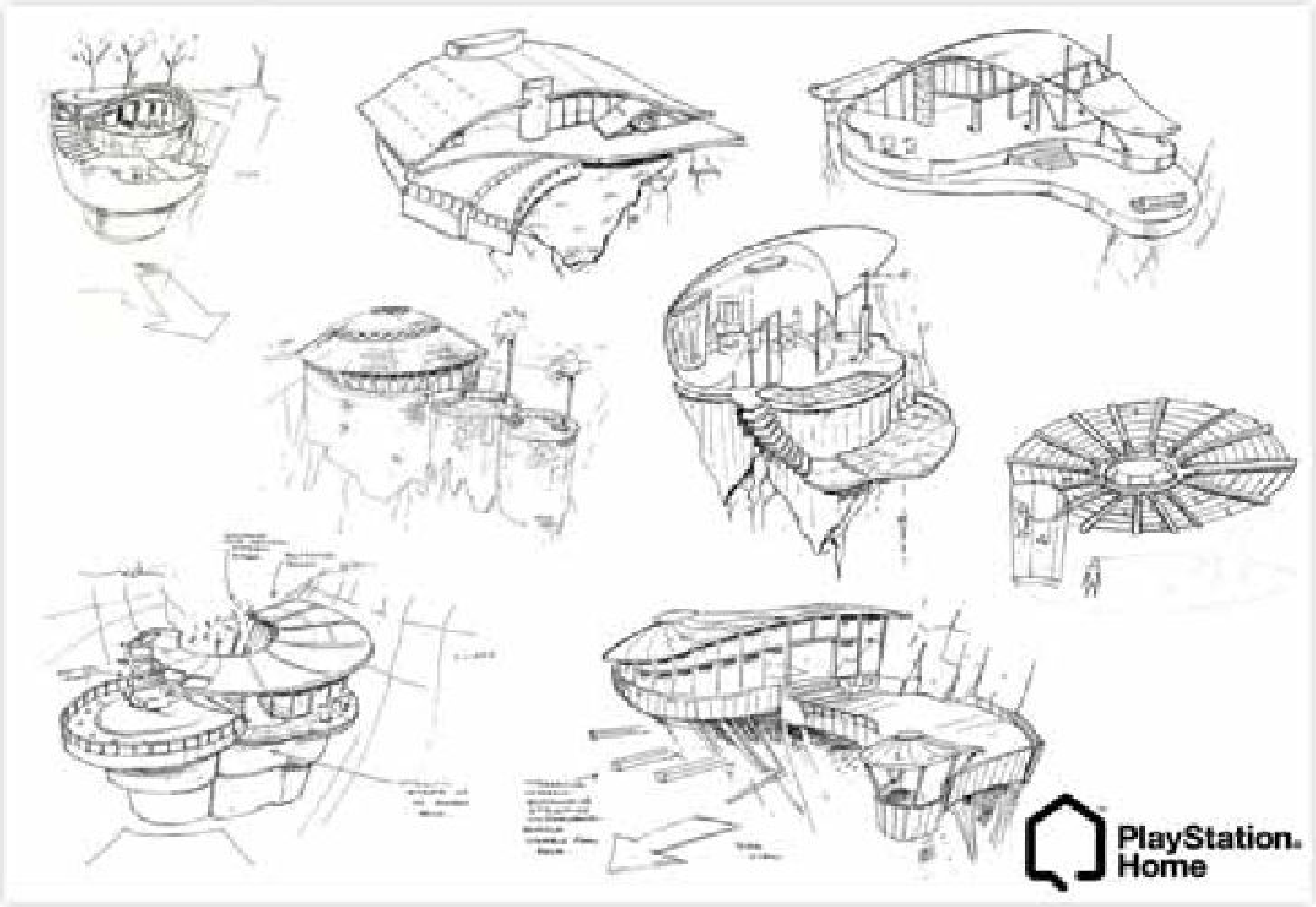
Set up and control complex game logic in a few steps.
Generate your perfect navigation mesh with a single click.
Create realistic behavior in no time.

Join the xaitment community now and turn your idea into a stunning prototype without paying any license cost. By signing up for free, you'll receive our complete modular AI Engine plus our world-class support. Experience the future of next gen game technology and work with the smartest AI technology available.

Contact xaitment today for more information about the BrainPack Program under brainpack@xaitment.com or visit our website www.xaitment.com

XaiTMENT
INTELLIGENCE ENGINEERED

GIVE EM BRAIN



Far left: Gaming within Home isn't limited to 2D minigames – games such as bowling can be also be played together.

Left: Some early concept art

Is it viable for studios to see Home as an additional revenue stream?
MG: You can potentially see games making as much money out of their themed spaces within home than with the title itself – it could balance the cost of development, make the upfront cost of the game cheaper, supported by extra functionality through Home microtransactions. We're not doing this as a charity, and we'd not expect any developer to do so either. It may take a bit of time as things progress and more functionality is exposed with updates, but it definitely should be the case that people want to do this not only to create communities but also for the financial prospects.

Another aspect for making money opportunities and working within Home is to make minigames, or games within the Home framework itself, and sell those. We can provide a platform that eases the process of developing something like that, and people will be willing to pay for a decent game that's written within the SDK. So maybe it's a case that people working on triple-A titles can work on a little minigame in their downtime after the project's wrapped and they can sell that, and that's another new revenue stream. The precedent for that exists.
PE: Well, look at PSN – people will happily pay £3.49 for a game. That's where some of the most exciting development is happening, because it's relatively low-budget and you can afford to take chances. Home gives the same opportunities – it's cheap to develop a minigame in Lua for Home.
MG: It's an interesting area, because we are in a sense in competition with the PSN games available on the PlayStation Store – people who are making a small game could go down the route of doing it within the Home framework. I don't think SCEI are too scared about the competition, though. We're having conversations with third-party groups and outsourcing groups where they're seeing that this is how their company could be working in the future, the whole company dedicated to designing and building minigames in Home. Hopefully it'll take off.

> ***"We don't want to have a green-light board that passes or refuses any content. We'll be giving guidelines, but ultimately the users will decide…"***

Could that also serve as an avenue for newer developers to get into the business?
PE: At the moment, the only requirement is that you have a licence to develop for the PS3. We are looking to remove that if possible, specificially when it comes to minigames and things like that. But yeah, there's a self-publishing ability on the PSN, and there's a similar kind of opportunity with Home.

With regards to third-party spaces, will you have guidelines on the amount of 'advertising' that goes on in there?
PE: Obviously there are standards of acceptability and good taste that we are able to enforce. But having said that, what we don't want to do is have a kind of green-light board that passes or refuses any content that goes on to the platform. We'll be giving guidelines, we'll be offering feedback on what content is going to work well, but ultimately I'd like to think that the user will decide what will be successful in there. The users will visit everywhere once, but they'll return to the places that are good.

Who's to say that there's too much advertising in a space? I don't think we can say that there are too many video screens or posters. But if users don't like that, they won't come back – and what we will be able to do is track this, and if you know that visits are tailing off then something's going wrong. So, to a certain extent, we don't need to be too stringent, because time will tell what works and what doesn't.

Are there any plans for user-generated content further down the line?
MG: It's always been on the list, and a lot of decisions we made with how the framework works, and that fact that we're using the Lua scripting language, have been made with that possibility in mind. That's the ultimate goal that we work towards – allowing UGC. Obviously we're not naive, and we know that with an online service you have to have strict moderation – we don't want the user to be exposed to rubbish. But with the right things in place – some process, such as user-reviews or pre-moderation – there are ways of getting that, and that's ultimately where we'd like to go, but there's a lot to be dealt with on that front.

I'm going to buy some sun glasses.
akewt
paulr1970

YOUR BEST NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION?
A NEW JOB WITH A COMPANY THAT'S GOING PLACES
VACANCIES INCLUDE:
CODERS - LEVEL DESIGNERS
ANIMATORS - 3D ARTISTS
PRODUCERS - CHARACTER ARTISTS
HEADSTRONG GAMES
DO THE SMART THING!
MAKE YOUR MOTHER PROUD!
www.headstrong-games.com
HEADSTRONG GAMES

datascope
RECRUITMENT

Sony Computer Entertainment, London Studio

SCE London Studio is a world class development studio. It has unrivalled development facilities and offers a creative and stimulating environment based in the heart of Soho. Established in 1993, It has gained an enviable reputation for creating fun, innovative games, with a diverse portfolio of titles demonstrating the versatility of the PlayStation® family of consoles and offering something for everyone.

SONY
COMPUTER
ENTERTAINMENT ®

The studio is currently hard at work on the highly anticipated PlayStation®Home and EyePet™ for PLAYSTATION 3, whilst the future-focused new concept team remains committed to developing new ways to play, ensuring that the studio remains at the forefront of social and lifestyle game development.

We are now looking for first class programmers to join the development team. Roles include Gameplay, Tools, Graphics, Computer Vision, Network and Signal Processing. Candidates will be highly motivated, talented individuals. If you want to work on innovative, ground breaking projects for a World class studio, apply now to our retained consultants, Datascope Recruitment.

Datascope are exclusive recruiters for SONY Computer Entertainment. Please email or talk in confidence with Andrea and Julien, quoting ref DEV0812.
Andrea@datascope.co.uk
Julien@datascope.co.uk

our expertise: your development
datascope - recruitment specialists for interactive entertainment

020 7580 6018 **www.datascope.co.uk/scee**

---

ideaworks3D

Creating outstanding games for digital-download platforms

Trusted by world-leading publishers to develop and extend their premium franchises faithfully to all digital-download platforms.

Multi award-winning studio, targetting iPhone, XBLA, PSNetwork, WiiWare and N-Gage.

Future-proof your content across console, handheld and smartphone by utilising our unique Airplay™ technology.

Ideaworks3D London Studio
Email - bizdev@ideaworks3d.com
Phone - 08456 434969
Web - www.ideaworks3d.com

develop WINNER
Best Mobile Studio 2008

FINALIST develop
Best Use Of A Licence 2008

FINALIST develop
Technical Innovation 2008

London Underground

The UK capital has found itself in the midst of a renaissance for games development of late, with new studios and games-related business springing up. **Michael French**, **Ed Fear** and **Will Freeman** go on a London studio crawl…

Just over three years ago, an article in *Develop* predicted that studios in London were set for extinction. Some high profile studio closures – Argonaut, blue52, Intrepid and Elixir – and the rising value of the pound suggested that games development as a business was being priced out of the UK capital.

But it hasn't taken long for that prediction to be proven wrong. In the past few years new studios in London have been opened by Rockstar, Zoe Mode, even Atari and Xbox. So, a resurgence is on the cards – and about time, too, say many of the people there.

"London, apart from being the capital and a huge city in its own right, is probably the most cosmopolitan place in the world. Whilst many games companies have moved away from London over the years there is still a huge opportunity to draw on the unique resources London has to offer, increasingly interesting in today's competitive climate," says Headstrong chief Bradley Crooks.

> ***"A resurgence is on the cards for London games development."***

The city represents a key source of talent for those based there as well. Sony London Studios' development director Mike Haigh describes the unique cross-cultural nature of creative industries such as film, television, music, art, fashion as well as games, blending with the fast-paced London lifestyle as making the big smoke prime for "pulling in world-class talent, not only within the UK, but from other thriving global cities as well".

"When I started in the industry 12 years ago there was a thriving games development community in London which seemed to ebb away during the latter half of the 1990s and the early part of this decade. I think a lot of the guys who worked at places like Argonaut and Psygnosis look back at that time with great affection, I know I do, particularly some of the rather legendary ECTS parties. It always made a lot of sense to me to set up in London; it's a great place to live, it's got a massive pool of talent to draw from and it's far easier to attract people from other countries. I think the fact so many other developers have returned backs that up," says Nick Rodriguez, head of the recently-opened Zoe Mode London.

Due to its size, however, London doesn't boast the same kind of community feel for its developers that hubs like Brighton, Leamington Spa, Guildford or Dundee might claim to have – even if it has more developers working in its city limits than those. Many in London, however, are happy with this more independent feel.

"I'd certainly endorse a stronger London development culture. Maybe it's the inherent competitiveness that London provokes, but that's not necessarily a bad thing," says Ideaworks3D's studio head Rob Hendry.

"I think developers in London aren't too aware of each other because we are scattered around the city and the various operations are still, on the whole, relatively small. That will change as we all grow," adds Zoe Mode's Rodriguez.

"In terms of developing that in a more formal sense I think London developers need a voice, we need to shout about why this city is back on the development scene and why it's a brilliant place to live and work."

■ *Over the next five pages, we profile many of the studios in the city, and prove exactly why games development in London is something to shout about.*

Headstrong Games

Curve Studios

Gamewax

Mediatonic

SCE London Studio

Partnertrans

Ideaworks3D

Zöe Mode London

tsunami™
MUSIC

LEADING MUSIC COMPOSITION & SOUND DESIGN
FOR THE VIDEO GAMES INDUSTRY

RECENT CLIENTS INCLUDE
EA GAMES ▪ WARNER BROS ▪ THQ ▪ UBISOFT
EIDOS ▪ CODEMASTERS ▪ KUJU

www.tsunami.co.uk
E: info@tsunami.co.uk // T: +44 (0)20 7350 2828

Headstrong Games

Nestled in the South Bank, one of London's hubs for the creative arts, Headstrong is carving a reputation for itself as quite the Wii specialist, long having a good relationship with Nintendo and now working on Wii shooter *The House of the Dead: Overkill* for Sega.

Being based in such a cosmopolitan city has given Headstrong a "mix of people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds," says studio head Bradley Crooks.

> **"London has a massive breadth of opportunities for those with the right skillsets."**

"I would also say we have a very open recruitment attitude, and being based in London really supports that. We want people that have a passion for games, and the almost universal appeal that games have breeds that passion in a wide variety of people."

Of course, it's not all work work work for the Headstrong boys and girls – the studio is pretty keen on fostering close links between its employees. "There's a strong commitment to social networking here," says Crooks. "A lot of people here are involved in the local arts and music scene, and a pint or two at one of the many great local pubs is never too far off the agenda."

And, if you're questioning whether London holds the key to your game development future, Crooks is keen to espouse the long-term picture. "If you're a young, ambitious wannabe developer, why would you not want to leap into an exciting career in a city where the streets are paved with gold? London's strength, other than the obvious benefits of working in arguably the best city in the world, is that it offers the opportunity to consider your first position as the start of career rather than just the start of a job. London has a massive breadth of opportunities for those with the right skill sets, with games development being just one part of a much larger group of industries where the same skills are in demand."

EMERGENCY
TRAUMA

FOUNDED: 2000 (as Kuju London)

HEADCOUNT: 60

NOTABLE GAMES: *Battalion Wars 1 & 2, The House of the Dead: Overkill*

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Bradley Crooks (studio head), Steve Pritchard (development director), Tancred Dyke-Wells (creative director)

TEL: 020 7593 2230
www.headstrong-games.com

Curve

Although Curve itself is a relative newcomer to the London games scene, its staff of veteran designers are very familiar with the capital and have seen the ups and downs of its games development scene.

"There have been a few new studios set up in London recently, but it would seem that there are still fewer now than there were five years ago," says art director Jaid Mindang.

> **"London is still central to the games industry in the UK."**

"The business has undergone a long period of consolidation, and although the industry has generally tended to buck the trend of economic recession, its presence in London now is still not as great as it used to be. But the recent high profile studio openings in London show that, despite the tough climate for UK development in recent years, London is still central to the games industry in the UK."

To prove it, Curve has managed to attract a number of staff – away from bigger competitors – thanks to its London location.

Says Mindang: "Many of our employees have actually joined us from larger and more established companies that were offering better benefits, purely because of our work/life balance, projects and company culture. We feel that we can continue to be a competitive employer merely by the fact of us offering our staff something different, something that other studios don't offer."

However, design director Jonathan Biddle reckons that the London games development scene could do with chasing a more community feel, however. "While the industry here is still interlinked, and everyone either knows someone or has worked in all of the other London-based companies, we don't have the same sense of community that the other hubs enjoy," says Biddle. "It seems obvious, but an initiative like Yorkshire and Humber's Game Republic would be very beneficial to development in the area, and a great forum for sharing techniques, processes and even work."

WHO PLAYED J.D.'S DAD ON "SCRUBS"?
GEORGE CLOONEY
JACK NICHOLSON
JOHN RITTER
CHEVY CHASE
NAPOLEON

FOUNDED: 2005
HEADCOUNT: 30
NOTABLE GAMES: *Buzz! Master Quiz (PSP), Buzz! Brain Bender (PSP)*
KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Jason Perkins (managing director), Jaid Mindang (art director), Jonathan Biddle (design director), Richie Turner (technical director), Simon Cooper (lead artist), Russell Kerrison (lead designer), Martin Fermor (lead programmer)

CONTACT: info@curve-studios.com

Gamewax

Gamewax is a fairly unique studio in the UK capital which has pretty much flown under the radar since its founding in 2006.

The West London team of arcade game developers is largely made up of Japanese staff, formally of some major Japanese publishers with the majority having over 10 years experience each. It also has a sister studio in Kobe, Japan. The team is also a registered developer for 360, DS and Wii platforms and is currently actively exploring various technology and concepts as it plans to enter the console games sector.

"Being located in London has great worldwide appeal," says development director Mitsu Asami. "We have great accessibility here so this is fantastic for clients and visitors from overseas as well. From a development perspective, the large population makes it easier to find resources whilst providing a vast, diverse market for valuable research. London is often the trendsetter for many sectors so there's good reason to be here."

The team's small scale has also meant its been relatively cheap for the studio to set up in central London, as well. "Due to the size of our company, there was no huge benefit to move out of the capital – which would have killed off a great proximity advantage to multiple arcade sites and our ability to observe market trends of the amusement industry easily," says Asami. "There is of course, a higher cost impact to consider in all of this including personal living expenses but it's not easy to judge the quality of life by implication of money alone. We love London and are excited to be here.

> ***"London provides a vast, diverse market for research."***

"London is one of the most attractive and fast moving places in the world. One of the primary reasons we decided to setup in the London was to infuse our Japanese cultural and design background with European influences and create a unique flavor."

FOUNDED: 2006

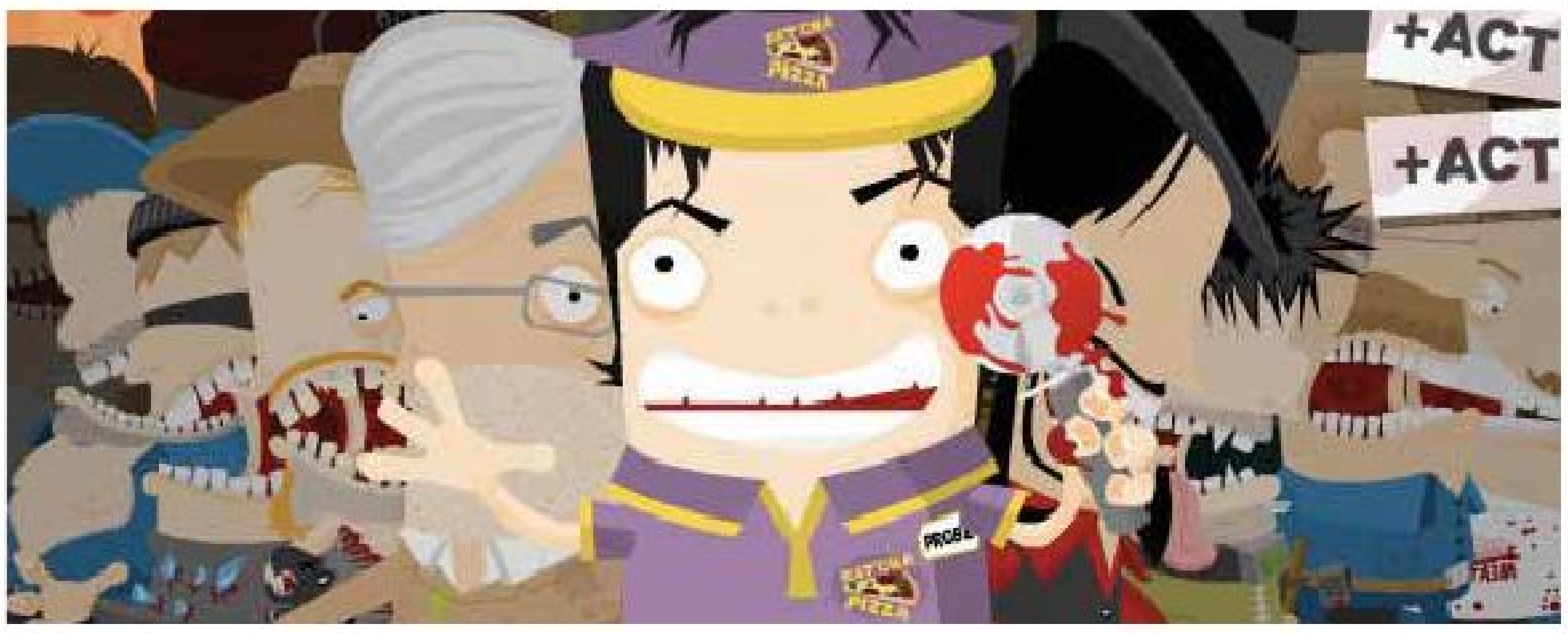
HEADCOUNT: 12

NOTABLE GAMES: *Chase HQ 2* (Taito arcade), *Wacky Races* (Banpresto arcade)

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Takeshi Uchi, Mitsu Asami

CONTACT: mitsu@gamewax.com

Mediatonic



Mediatonic is the exact kind of studio that many think wouldn't be sustainable in London – a smaller games team working on indie-style projects. But Mediatonic in fact prospers thanks to being based in London rather than being punished by the city's significant cost demands.

A developer of Flash games, the studio has worked on games including *Amateur Surgeon* and *Gigolo Assassin* for Adult Swim's online sites and *Poppit* for EA's Pogo.com.

> ***"To keep our ideas fresh we have monthly outings to different events in London."***

"There is an incredible amount happening on a daily basis in London," says game director Paul Croft. "Elements in our games are inspired from a wide variety of sources from art exhibitions to comedy concerts. In order to keep our ideas fresh and take advantage of everything that's happening on our doorstep we have monthly studio outings to different events happening in London.

"Our studio has an eclectic mix of people and we've been able to tap into some of the things at the heart of London. Concepts for different parts of our games come from all members of the team; we believe the environment we're in and the things we do as a studio give us many benefits in terms of the games we great."

Plus, says Croft, "London hosts many game events and is a strong hub for the industry there's a lot going on studios can tap into and benefit from.

Mediatonic also finds that London offers a good talentbase – but not in the obvious way.

Says Croft: "As we make web based games, our main competition when recruiting tends to come from the large London advertising agencies as oppose to other development studios. Luckily the fact that we make games also gives us the advantage over these agencies, it's a very appealing career and as such we're often inundated with applicants for positions and can cherry pick the very best candidates."

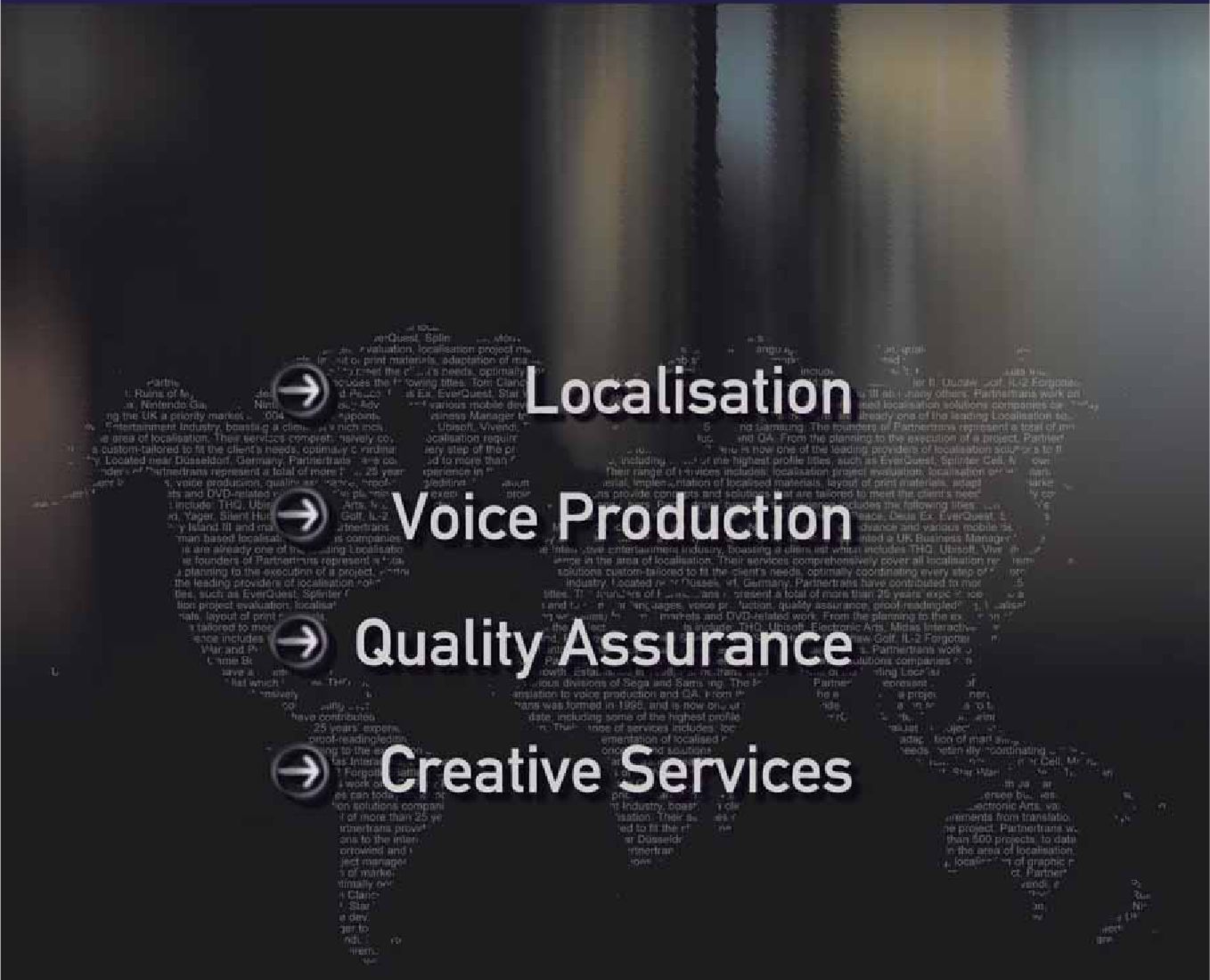
FOUNDED: 2005

HEADCOUNT: 15

NOTABLE GAMES: *Amateur Surgeon, Gigolo Assassin, Poppit*

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Paul Croft (director of games) David Bailey (managing director)

CONTACT: info@mediatonic.co.uk



localisation solutions for the entertainment industry.

Localisation

Voice Production

Quality Assurance

Creative Services

The partner for all your translation needs:

partnertrans.

Partnertrans®

Tel: +49 (0)2104 172660
Fax: +49 (0)2104 172658
Email: info@partnertrans.com

Partnertrans® Ltd.

Tel: +44 (0)1753 247 731
Fax: +44 (0)1753 245 531
Email: info_uk@partnertrans.com

We specialise in the complete range of localisation solutions.
Visit www.partnertrans.com for our full range of services.

www.partnertrans.com

SCE London Studio

Sony's London Studio is one of the longest-running of all the teams in the UK capital – and with offices just off of Oxford Street, is probably the most centrally-located as well. Which can't be bad for its 260 staff, working on a variety of projects from *SingStar* to *EyePet* and the recently-launched PlayStation Home.

Given the studio's age, it's been perfectly placed to see the London games scene resurge in recent years.

> ***"We have an extraordinary group of creative contributors."***

"There has definitely been a recruitment drive in London, particularly to grow the social games genre," says Mike Haigh, development director, referring to the studio's efforts in the field. "Linked to this is the unique cross-cultural nature of our creative industries – games, film, television, music, art and fashion – and with the fast-paced London lifestyle, the capital is pulling in world-class talent, not only within the UK, but from other thriving global cities as well."

Haigh isn't phased by the issues of cost associated with running a business in a capital city, either.

"The costs to operate a studio in the capital are definitely higher, but the benefits far outweigh the negatives. You just have to look at the success of London Studio's portfolio to know that what we have in return are an extraordinary group of ambitiously creative contributors who want to work hard, play hard and 'up the benchmark' in terms of quality of the consumer experience." Plus, he adds, all employees can request extra financial support for healthcare and childcare.

"There are incredible professional opportunities and social benefits available in London which offers a wealth of diverse experiences for those starting or continuing their career. And the Sony Worldwide Studios network provides other opportunities should they want to mix in a bit of travel in with their careers with us."

online
SingStore
Get Online!
Browse and Buy songs & wallpapers from the SingStore
Check out the best performances in the SingStar Scene
Get Connected!

FOUNDED: 1993

HEADCOUNT: 260

NOTABLE GAMES: *SingStar*, *EyePet*, PlayStation Home

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Jamie Macdonald (VP WWS Europe), Mike Haigh, (development director)

CONTACT: SCE London, 15 Great Marlborough Street, London, W1F 7HR. hradmin@scee.net

Partnertrans

Currently celebrating its tenth year, German localisation firm Partnertrans has just opened its first international office in the UK – based on the edge of London – and has its sights set on further international expansion.

So what has attracted this already-established localisation firm to th UK capital? It turns out that London's benefits don't just apply to games studios, but to the service industries as well.

"Before choosing a location we evaluated the situation in and around London," says the firm's Iris Ludolf. "We very quickly came to the conclusion that it would be best for us if we avoided the possible problems raised in those questions by choosing a location that still enjoys all the benefits of the London area without suffering from the drawbacks present with a location in central London."

And, of course, being situated near London – arguably one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the UK, if not the world – is perfect when it comes to tapping into a multi-cultural workforce, something absolutely vital to a company in the business of not just translation. After all, if you're to have a localisation that feels natural to players across the world, it'll have to be overseen by natives who know their respective cultures in and out.

> ***"The very nature of our business demands a highly diverse team of people."***

"The very nature of our business demands a highly diverse team of people to work together, so in a demographic sense London very much stands for how our team is set up," explains Ludolf

"As it turned out for us it is not so much about the talents found in London but the willingness of people to move into or near the city. The location has certainly been an important issue for our candidates which we might not have attracted if we were located somewhere more remote."

FOUNDED: 1998

HEADCOUNT: 250

NOTABLE GAMES: Localisation of *Lord of the Rings Online: Shadows of Angmar* and *Mines of Moria*, *EndWar*, *Haze*, *Splinter Cell*, *High School Musical 3* (mobile)

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Markus Ludolf (CEO)

CONTACT: info_uk@partnertrans.com

SE1 1JR

Our code needs your code

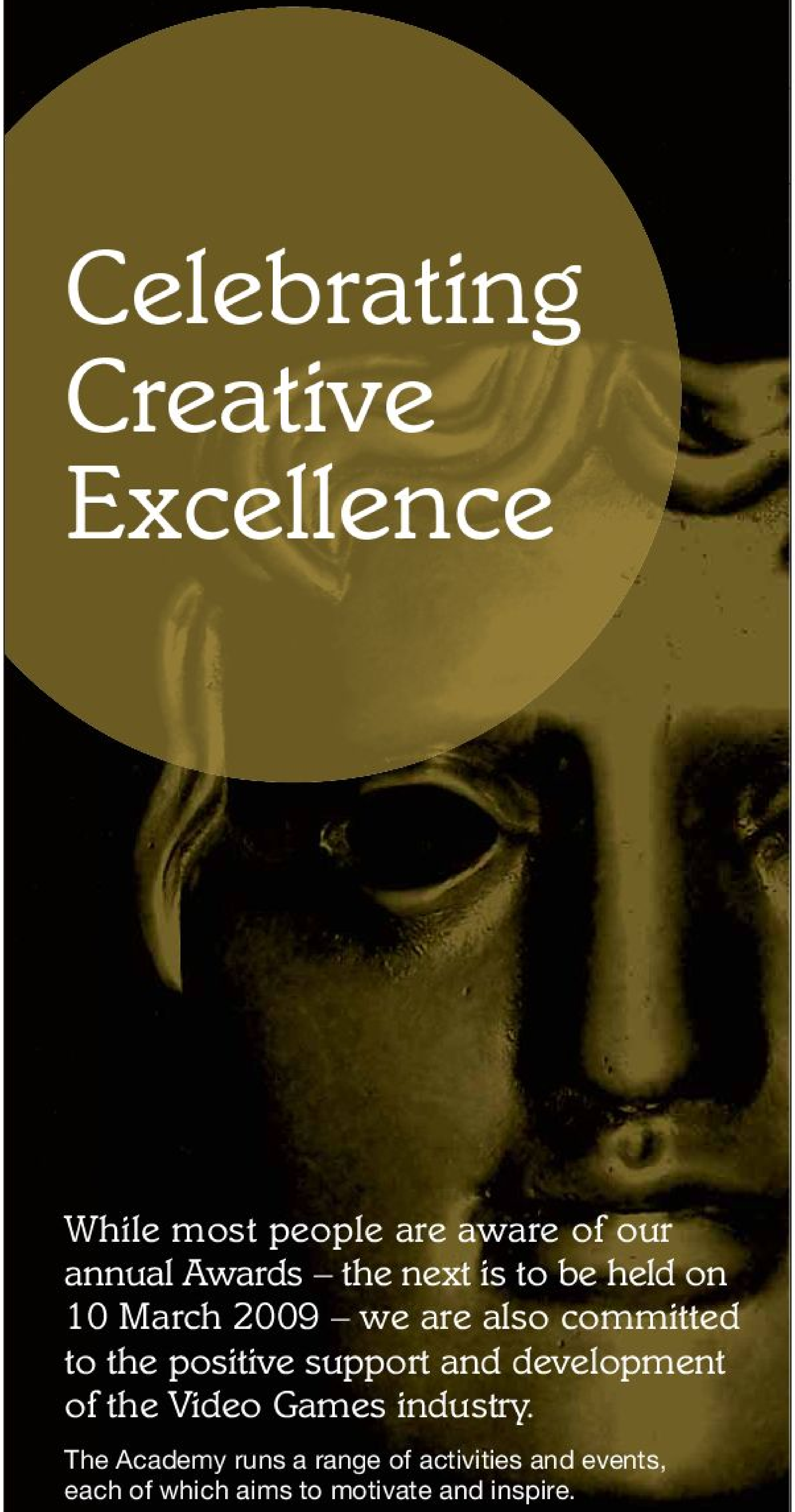
Zoë Mode, the world's leading independent developer of music and party games is now in London.

As part of our continued expansion and commitment to creating the best possible games, we are looking to recruit experienced, gifted programmers for our London studio.

So if you want to be part of a team that thrives on excellence, whilst having fun doing so, then Zoë Mode London is the post code for you.

For further information on Zoe Mode please visit our website, alternatively you can contact us by email: **jobs@zoemode.com**

www.zoemode.com



Celebrating Creative Excellence

While most people are aware of our annual Awards – the next is to be held on 10 March 2009 – we are also committed to the positive support and development of the Video Games industry.

The Academy runs a range of activities and events, each of which aims to motivate and inspire.

Through our Awards, Events and by actively building our Video Games industry membership base, we aim to Celebrate Creative Excellence.

For further information please contact Kelly Smith
kellys@bafta.org or **020 7292 5821**

Alternatively visit our web site **www.bafta.org/games**

BRITISH ACADEMY
VIDEO GAMES AWARDS

10 MARCH 2009 LONDON HILTON PARK LANE

PYRAMAT PERFORMANCE GAMING
Official Supplier

MCV develop
Official Print Partners

DKPM
Official Brand Partner

BAFTA is a registered charity

FLASH GAMES
SERIOUS BUSINESS

Name: Gung-ho
Game: Kitten FIST

MEDIATONIC™
Groundbreaking Online Games.
www.mediatonic.co.uk

Ideaworks3D

If proof were needed that London is host to cutting-edge games developers, then Ideaworks3D is it. A handheld games and technology developer, it has invested over 30 man-years in its Airplay technology, which has been licensed to power a number of handheld games published by firms in Europe, North America and Japan.

Ideaworks3D is also a skilled developer, its most recent notable game being *Metal Gear Solid Mobile* for BREW and N-Gage.

> ***"London is a creative city that attracts the best people."***

"At the end of 2008, we find ourselves in an enviable position," says CTO Tim Closs.

"Having for years been viewed, wrongly, as focusing purely on niche high-end projects, the startling success of Apple's iPhone and App Store, and major emerging native platforms such as Nokia N-Gage has brought a broader awareness of our value offering."

As it looks forward to 2009, the company is preparing to support more platforms and further establish itself as a key name for mobile games development. Says Closs: "The platform approach and business model of iPhone is becoming aligned in publishers' minds with handheld platforms and even digital distribution platforms such as XBLA. Ideaworks3D is currently extending Airplay to support these. The increased tools and runtime functionality already added to Airplay to exploit OpenGL ES 2.0 can naturally be expanded to encompass the higher-end platforms such as WiiWare and PlayStation Network."

As well as expanding its platform remit, the studio is also keenly keeping its workforce diverse, reflecting their home the city of London. Says Rob Hendry, head of studio at Ideaworks3D: "London is a creative city that attracts the best people from around the UK and the rest of the world. We have always worked hard to source staff globally, reflected in a company make-up which is notably diverse for its size."

FOUNDED: 1998

HEADCOUNT: 65

NOTABLE GAMES: *Metal Gear Solid Mobile, Project Gotham Racing Mobile, The Sims 2 Mobile*

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Rob Hendry (Head of Studio), Tim Closs (CTO), Alex Caccia (CEO), Julian Jones (VP business development)

CONTACT: julian@ideaworks3d.com

Zöe Mode London

Zoe Mode's London team was opened just three months ago, after it became apparent that its Brighton parent was not only reaching full capacity at nearly 300 staff, but was still hungry for new talent to support its lifestyle games. The team is headed up by Nick Rodriguez.

Like his peers at Sony's London Studio, Rodriguez says concerns of the higher cost of living and operating costs on the capital aren't as high as many might fear.

"In the current climate, some of the things we would have expected to be very expensive are actually very competitive, office space for instance, we are looking to outgrow the current office in the next six months or so and it looks like there are some great deals about.

"With regards to staff, many of them were London-based already and so are just relieved not to be spending so much time and money on commuting. One of the things we were very conscious of when choosing the location for the new studio was that it was appealing to staff and there was easy access to the rest of the city and the commuter belt. It would have been odd not to take advantage of everything the city has to offer and chosen a location that wasn't central and easily accessible."

Being based in London also perfectly places Zoe Mode's new team when it comes to finding people who have worked in other media fields who can compliment the kind of games the studio makes.

"We've had a policy of looking for people from outside the industry at Zoe Mode for some time with excellent results. We've hired people from film, broadcast and advertising as well as the corporate sector. The thing is to get people to understand that games have grown up and that skills from other industries are transferable and valuable to the games industry. Given the massive talent pool here in London, it would be foolish not to investigate and leverage all that potential."

> ***"London has a massive talentpool."***

FOUNDED: 2008

KEY PERSONNEL/STAFF: Nick Rodriguez (head of studio)

www.zoemode.com

Other key London studios

Sports Interactive

Terriers United

Based in Old Street, Sports Interactive formed in 1994 and currently employs 44, with an additional 1,500 part time researchers across the globe. Most famous for its phenomenally successful *Football Manager* series, Sports Interactive is currently working on *Football Manager Live*, a massively multiplayer online football management game.

In 2006 the East London studio was acquired by Sega, which had long published Sports Interactive's output.

As well as courting a reputation for generous support for charities like Warchild and Games Aid, Sports Interactive counts nine of its creations in the UK's top 20 fastest-selling PC games of all time.

Rockstar London

Rockstar London is the second most recent development house to join the Rockstar family, which counts nine studios amongst its ranks, including *GTA* creator Rockstar North.

The London operation continues to expand in the wake of the tumultuous release of its debut title, the controversial *Manhunt 2* for PS2 and Wii. More recently the team at Rockstar London worked with their colleagues from Rockstar San Diego on *Midnight Club: LA Remix*, a PSP port of the latest racing game from the American studio.

Rockstar London was nominated for a Develop Industry Excellence Award in 2008 for Best New UK/European Studio.

Rocksteady Studios

Highbury-based developer Rocksteady is currently working on the hotly-tipped *Batman: Arkham Asylum* game for PS3, 360 and PC.

Most famous for its work on PS2 first-person shooter *Urban Chaos*, Rocksteady is based in a specifically-converted factory in North London, which now includes its own on onsite motion capture facility equipped 30 Vicon MX F40 cameras.

Founded in 2004, over 55 people are now employed at the company, many of whom are senior industry professionals who have worked together for many years. Co-owners Sefton Hill (game director) and Jamie Walker (studio director) have both been involved with games since the 1990s.

Atari London

This new Hammersmith studio is headed up by Paulina Bozek, former director of the SingStar franchise as Sony's London Studio.

Located to take advantage of the huge talent pool in London, no specific titles have yet been confirmed to be under development at Atari London. However Bozek and her colleagues are planning to focus mass-market consumer games and services for online-enabled devices.

The studio is still very much in its formative months, currently with a headcount of around just six who are coordinating the expansion – but the outfit is expected to grow to up to 150 staff in time.

Beautiful Game Studios

Set up in 2003 to work on *Championship Manager 5* and all subsequent entries to the series, Beautiful Game Studios is an internally owned Eidos studio. It shares offices with its parent company in Wimbledon.

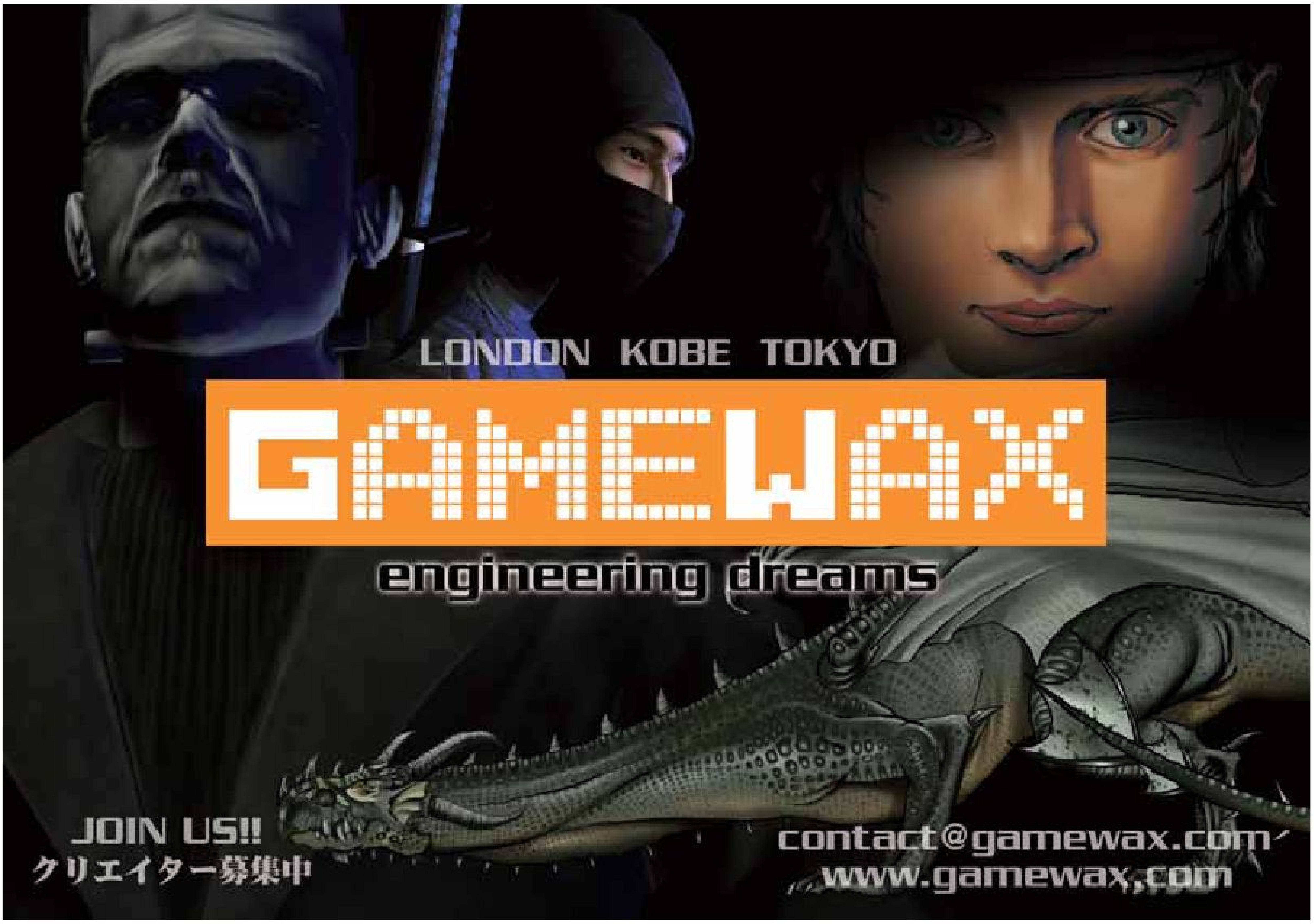
The development house boasts 40 staff, with over 150 cumulative years of experience creating sports games behind them. Roy Meredith serves as studio manager.

Having developed five Championship Manager titles for PC along with several builds for other formats including 360 and PS3, Beautiful Game Studios is currently hard at work on the 2009 addition to the series, which is due for release in April.

Xbox Live London

Little is known about this new Microsoft team, except that it has been assembled this year to 'focus on creating Xbox Live interactive platform content along with social experiences'. While details of what exactly is in production has yet to be confirmed, a job posting this year revealed 'there are specific projects underway'. It is also expected that as the Xbox Live Studio grows it will liaise with partner developers on creating Live content.

Concentrating on content tailoured for the markets in the UK and surrounding countries, the employees at Xbox Live Studio are expected to amplify the vibrancy of each of the European markets.


LONDON KOBE TOKYO
GAMEWAX
engineering dreams
JOIN US!!
クリエイター募集中
contact@gamewax.com
www.gamewax.com

CURVE
STUDIOS
Curve is hiring.
www.curve-studios.com

The group has recently moved into huge new offices in Nottingham's Lace Market district

Monument to Change

While it might originally have been known as a middleware company, Monumental Games is ramping up its game development efforts. **Ed Fear** caught up with the team to find out what's been going on behind closed doors…

Nestled away in Nottingham, you might not have heard of Monumental – or, if you had, perhaps they'd been pidgeon-holed as a middleware company, having previously focused a lot of its efforts on licensing its online-focused Monumental Technology Suite. But the company has been rapidly, albeit quietly, growing its internal development efforts, to the point where it now employs over 100 people – making it one of the larger independent studios in the UK, and one of the few British developers focused on pioneering in the online space.

The reason we might be slightly in the dark about the company's growth and efforts is possibly due to its insistence on taking a different path from other independent developers. Its two most recent management-level hires – Mark Howell, chief financial officer, and Jeremy Middleton as non-executive director – have come from outside the industry, from MediaSquare and PriceWaterhouseCoopers respectively.

"These people from outside of the games industry are more than prepared to say the way this industry works is insanity, and it needs to get better," says Paul Mayze, Monumental's chief operating officer.

"If we dont change these development models then there aren't going to be any developers left. You know, you read a lot about developers in trouble, and I think a lot of the time it's because there's better deals to be had that mean more stability."

Rik Alexander, CEO of the studio, explains that this stance has been the focus from the get-go: "We're breaking boundaries in terms of developer-publisher business model, were doing deals that are not traditional at all – which is one of the reasons we set this company up, actually. We didn't want to do just a normal publisher-developer model, it didn't make any sense to me. 18 to 24 month cycles and then spending your profit in those between times before you get more work – that doesnt strike me as a very stable business."

DEAL WITH IT

Its first MMO, the free-to-play *Football Superstars*, is a prime example of such broken boundaries – Alexander sits on the board of the game's publisher, CyberSports, and Monumental owns a stake in the company. Its second title, an internal IP based around another outdoor sport, has no publisher – instead kick-started with funds from East Midlands regional screen agency EM Media.

But while having such a fair relationship is something that every developer in the world would like, how do you begin to find and pitch those relationships – especially when online games have such considerable startup costs that some publishers have shelved more MMOs than they've actually released?

"Our stance is that we never really try to pitch anything," explains Alexander. "Its more a case of: 'This is what we do. If you want to come on board, then come and have a conversation with us, but we're not going to pitch it.' We will be doing this stuff regardless of anyone getting involved with it, its just going to happen. We've always been able to generate enough business to be able to fuel our ideas regardless of what publishers want to do, that's just how we approach business – we always want to make sure we can be self-sufficient without having to go and get a publisher deal."

This focus on self-sufficiency has gone as far as to see the studio open its own outsourcing studio in India – an ambition long-held by Alexander, but on hold until he could find the right people to run it. "You have to have someone who can go over to India or Romania or wherever, and can

> ***"Our stance is that we never try to pitch anything. We'll be doing this stuff regardless of anyone getting involved…"***
>
> ***Rik Alexander, Monumental***

MONUMENTAL

understand things like their laws and taxes," he says. The model is a natural fit for a company focused on MMOs, where maintaining several such games entirely in-house could easily see the company balloon to an unmanageable level.

Alexander is clear on the benefit – or perhaps necessity – of outsourcing for online companies. "Outsourcing is a staple part of game development now – if you're not outsourcing, you're not really thinking of your schedules properly. It's a headache, but once you get through that you have some good partners. MMOs are all about content, and having a couple of hundred people here isn't necessarily a good idea, bar the fact that its really hard to hire them. So going into India makes sense."

The Indian office has opened with five staff, and is planned to grow to about ten by the New Year. The initial focus will be on artwork – the first thing is to make sure it works, they stress – but the plan is to grow it to handle code as well. The benefits, bar the immediately obvious cost ones, are more about how effectively the process can fit in with the existing team, says Alexander.

"They have direct leads into the team – if they're working on environments, they'll be in contact with the senior environment lead here and they'll talk daily and feed directly in to it. So, essentially, they'll work as an extension rather than through the filter system that normally occurs when outsourcing, when you've got everything going through one person on each side. It gets through a lot of the problems there, so we're relatively confident we can make it work."

> ***"MMOs are all about content, and having a couple of hundred people here isn't necessarily a good idea…"***
>
> ***Rik Alexander, Monumental***

MANCHESTER

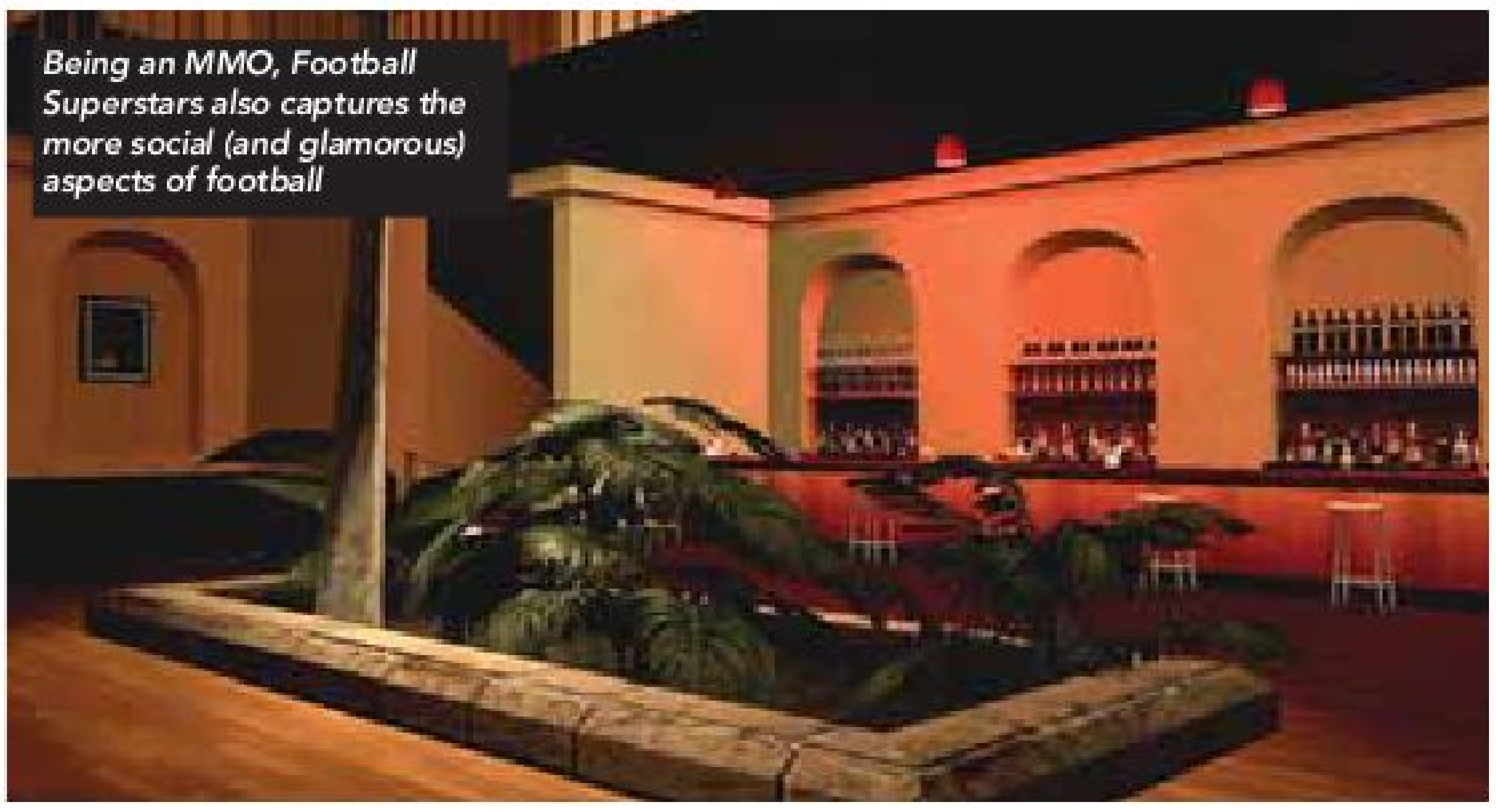
But it's not just into other countries that Monumental is pushing – it was also, perhaps surprisingly, one of the two companies to save Swordfish after its closure by parent Vivendi, purchasing the defunct developer's Manchester studio. But why would a company that's just moved into a brand new office buy part of another developer? The answer lies in Monumental's desire to not only cover the PC online space but also to diversify into the console market.

"They're one of the few developers in the world that have actually done Xbox Live SP," says Alexander, explaining the process of taking Xbox Live from the common peer-to-peer connections to a server-based model. "MMOs need a server because the clients can be hacked. Monumental Manchester is one of the few developers in the world that has solved this problem, they've been working on technology to facilitate that. It'll help bring persistence into the world, and open up possibilities for meta-gaming."

But besides from just wanting to use this in its console titles – the first of which, an online-focused racing licence, has been signed with a big publisher but so far not announced – this tech forms part of the MMO middleware that it still sells to other developers as well as using on its internal games. And with the notion of persistence and community within games fast becoming a must-have selling point, the timing couldnt be better, explains Alexander.

"We build online technology, we sell online technology, and we develop with online technology – that's what we do. There is a gold rush on with everyone wanting to get into persistent virtual worlds and thriving communities, and we don't just sell the shovels – we know how to dig."

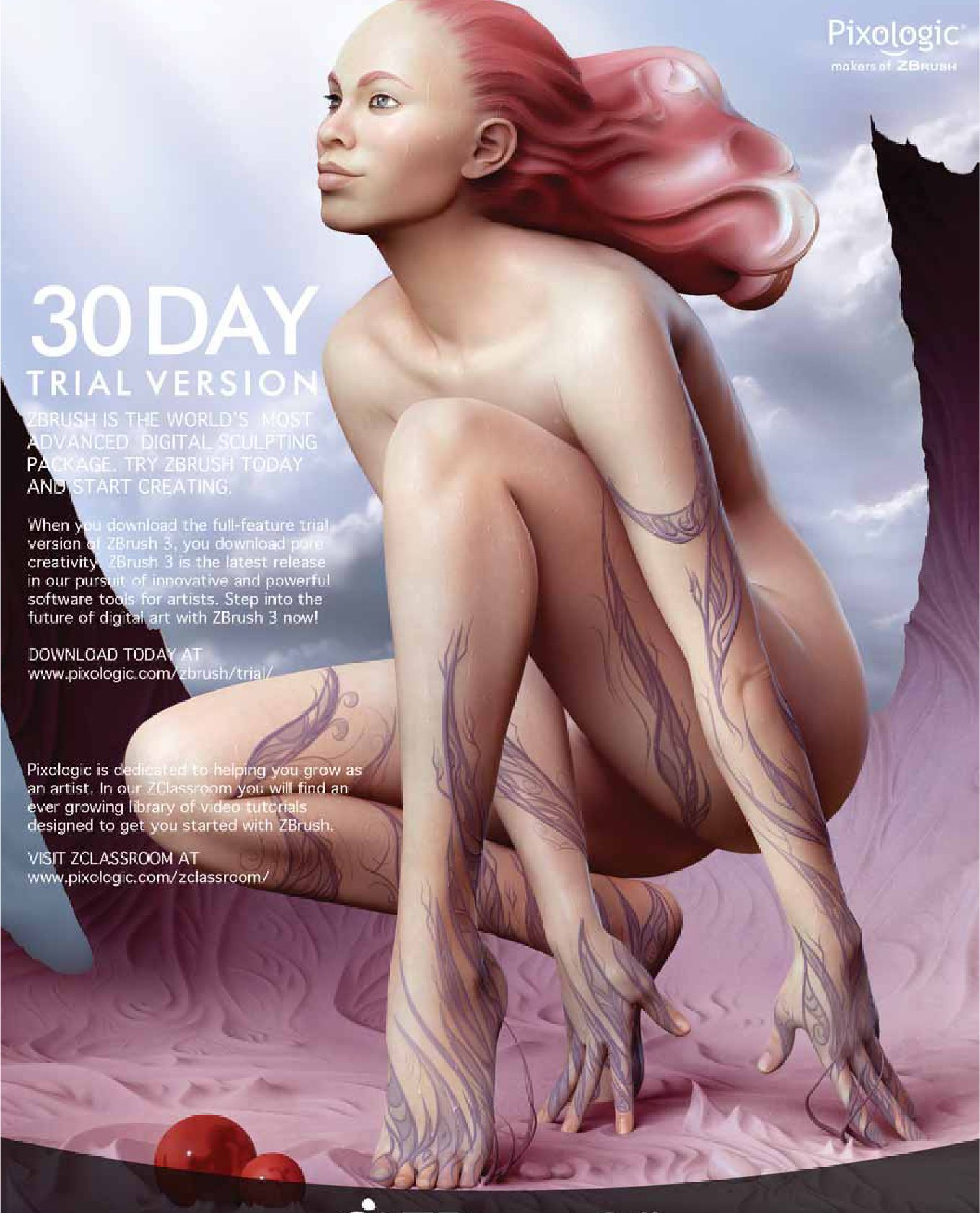
www.monumentalgames.com



Being an MMO, Football Superstars also captures the more social (and glamorous) aspects of football

Paul Mayze, COO

Rik Alexander, CEO



Pixologic
makers of ZBrush

30 DAY
TRIAL VERSION

ZBRUSH IS THE WORLD'S MOST ADVANCED DIGITAL SCULPTING PACKAGE. TRY ZBRUSH TODAY AND START CREATING.

When you download the full-feature trial version of ZBrush 3, you download pure creativity. ZBrush 3 is the latest release in our pursuit of innovative and powerful software tools for artists. Step into the future of digital art with ZBrush 3 now!

DOWNLOAD TODAY AT
www.pixologic.com/zbrush/trial/

Pixologic is dedicated to helping you grow as an artist. In our ZClassroom you will find an ever growing library of video tutorials designed to get you started with ZBrush.

VISIT ZCLASSROOM AT
www.pixologic.com/zclassroom/

ZBrush 3.1®
THE NEXT STEP

PIXOLOGIC.COM
Corporate

PIXOLOGIC.COM/ZBC
Community

PIXOLOGIC.COM/DOCS
Documentation

UNIVERSALLY THINKING

With devices converging and game content diverging into different media, there's more opportunity than ever for cohesive game universes, says FluffyLogic's **Ana Kronschnabl**...

Above: Like Enter the Matrix, EA's Dead Space has used a multi-media approach to extend the game's universe beyond just the title itself

There is little doubt that there has been a huge amount of convergence within both media content and technology of late: not only does my phone make calls but it also plays music and video. But, at the same time, there is also a huge amount of divergence: you can play *Sonic the Hedgehog* on mobile, PS3, Xbox 360, PC and more – not forgetting the myriad of other non-game Sonics, from cartoons to fan-created works on YouTube. How do content creators make sense of an event horizon that is both shrinking and growing at the same time?

DIEGESIS MURDER

In film studies, there is a useful term that can help us to understand this situation better: 'diegesis'. As a concept, diegesis originates from classical Greek theatre and has been adopted by film studies to refer to the narrative space a film might occupy – not just what happens on-screen that we see and hear, but also what happens to the characters but is not shown.

Let me give an example: in the film *Cloverfield*, we are introduced to a number of characters before the monster attacks the city, and they have clearly been written with lives that extend back before the events the film covers. These relationships are central to the narrative and are referred to directly in conversation in the film, but there is also a small portion of 'pre-recorded' footage on the camera that narrates events.

The monster is also central to unfolding events in the film, but as an audience we only glimpse a fraction of the conflict we know is occurring. The film does not show us everything that we know has happened and is currently happening. It is the 'narrative space' of the film – its diegesis – that contains the past of the characters, the conflict with the monster and much more. Our understanding of this diegesis is what makes the film's story what it is. Diegesis is the totality of events, wherever and whenever it happens.

What I propose is that we start to see all of our creations as part of an inclusive, diegetic media world. The diegetic world is one that refers to all we see, as well as all additional information that makes the world coherent and sensible: it contains all that the audience needs to understand the story. I'd like to take this idea further: as well as containing all essential story elements, diegetic media brings together all creative content on all platforms to create a world that is more than just one experience. It enables the players to experience our creations in a variety of ways and a variety of forms.

This idea can be illustrated in embryonic form in *The Matrix*. Whilst opinion on the films and games may be mixed, the Wachowski brothers' approach to the concept of *The Matrix* is very interesting in relation to diegetic media.

> ***"We should see games as part of a larger media project; as a narrative space to engage users over time..."***

The story starts, chronologically, with the short films *The Second Renaissance, Parts I and II*, which serves as backstory to the first film. The story then continues in the short film *Final Flight of the Osiris*, where the crew of the Osiris discover the Machine's plan to drill to Zion and they get a message out into the Matrix.

This narrative is pushed along different lines by the game *Enter the Matrix*, where the player has to acquire the urgent message mentioned in *Final Flight of the Osiris*, and pass it on to the other film characters – which turns into the focus for *Matrix Reloaded*. Other comics, short films, websites and the MMO feed into and grow out of the story in terms of events and characters, but also in expanding the narrative space and enriching it with each additional element.

There is, of course, an obvious business model relating to the sales potential every time there is a new release: creating a market for each element that is part of the overall diegetic media world. There is also an aspect of cultural amplification whereby the audience is encouraged to feel part of something bigger. Being involved in a culturally located diegetic media event means they will be more willing to invest in it over time, lending longevity to the overall concept or narrative. As games become ever more connected, we want the audiences to go further to explore deeper into the worlds we create, to take the 'red pill', to explore and come away wanting more.

EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

Not only is technology changing, but so is the audience and their expectations of what they want and expect from their entertainment. They are morphing from audience into creators in their own right, ripping, re-mixing and modding where they see fit. Where there is an official canon of the original creators there are many layers below this, where other creators – be they official or non-official – all add to the diegetic media world. They fill in the gaps left by the original, adding new concepts and ideas, but all within the same, original diegetic universe/narrative.

I suggest that we should start to see the creation of a game not in purely game terms, but that we should see it from the start as part of a larger, coherent diegetic media product; as a narrative and interactive space that will engage its users over a period of time. Whilst the game aspect of the concept may be the crucial aspect of the project initially, we should also consider how other media can best assist us in telling our stories.

www.fluffylogic.net

***Ana Kronschnabl** is the CEO of FluffyLogic, a game and digital media development studio in Bristol. She founded the website plugincinema.com and co-wrote the first book on the subject, 'Plug In & Turn On: A Filmmaker's Guide to the Internet'.*

the audio guys

AUDIO FOR GAMES

35+ YEARS OF COMBINED EXPERIENCE
ON 175+ PUBLISHED TITLES ON
ALL MAJOR FORMATS

develop
INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS
Creative Outsourcing Nominee 2008

www.theaudioguys.co.uk +44 (0) 1926 813546

BUILD

THE LATEST TOOLS NEWS, TECH UPDATES & TUTORIALS

LOCALISATION SPECIAL: The latest developments in the field, p73–82

TOOLS: Allegorithmic's Substance

p62

GUIDE: Source and process tools

p64

KEY RELEASE: FxStudio

p66

LittleBigProject

We sound out Sackboy's globe-trotting adventure, p69

EPIC DIARIES: EA DICE ON MIRROR'S EDGE > P71

Recession? That recession…

THERE ARE FEW THINGS more worrying at the start of an economic downturn than the rush of industry talking heads crowing about being 'recession-proof'. Frankly, unless you're a bailiff, a pawnbroker or selling moonshine, you're not in a recession-proof industry. And certainly if you're in an industry that relies on a $200 up front cost and $50 a pop thereafter, no matter how much you argue about hours-per-dollar value, you're going fall off a cliff.

And if you don't believe me, just look at the actions of publishers such as EA – six per cent of the workforce gone – or THQ – 17 per cent of the workforce cut. In fact, any business (bailiff, pawnbrokers and moonshine makers aside) not considering its headcount is going to be in for a shock.

But what does that mean for middleware companies? Well, apart from considering their headcount, such times can prove lucrative; as long as you're offering the right sort of product.

As ever, the basic balance between negative and positive remains the cost of investing in new technology versus the savings that can be made through that investment. The significant point in tight economic times however is savings – notably when it comes to man-months – become a crucial concern. The emphasis on hitting your deadlines with the minimum number of staff is an overwhelming issue, especially in terms of developers who are being paid fixed costs by meeting milestones. As such, proven middleware – especially if it comes with a flexible pricing scheme – should be an increasingly attractive proposition.

Conversely, this is not the time to be launching a disruptive piece of tech that may revolutionise the industry but requires staff retraining and a three-month delay in terms of hitting your release slot. You'd be better off boiling up sugarwater and potatoes.

Jon Jordan
jon.jordan@intentmedia.co.uk

< CODING >

SUBSTANTIAL WORLDS

Allegorithmic's procedural texturing technology is heading real-time thanks to Substance, **Jon Jordan** discovers…

Substance

Price: TBA
Company: Allegorithmic
Contact: +33 4 73 34 70 80

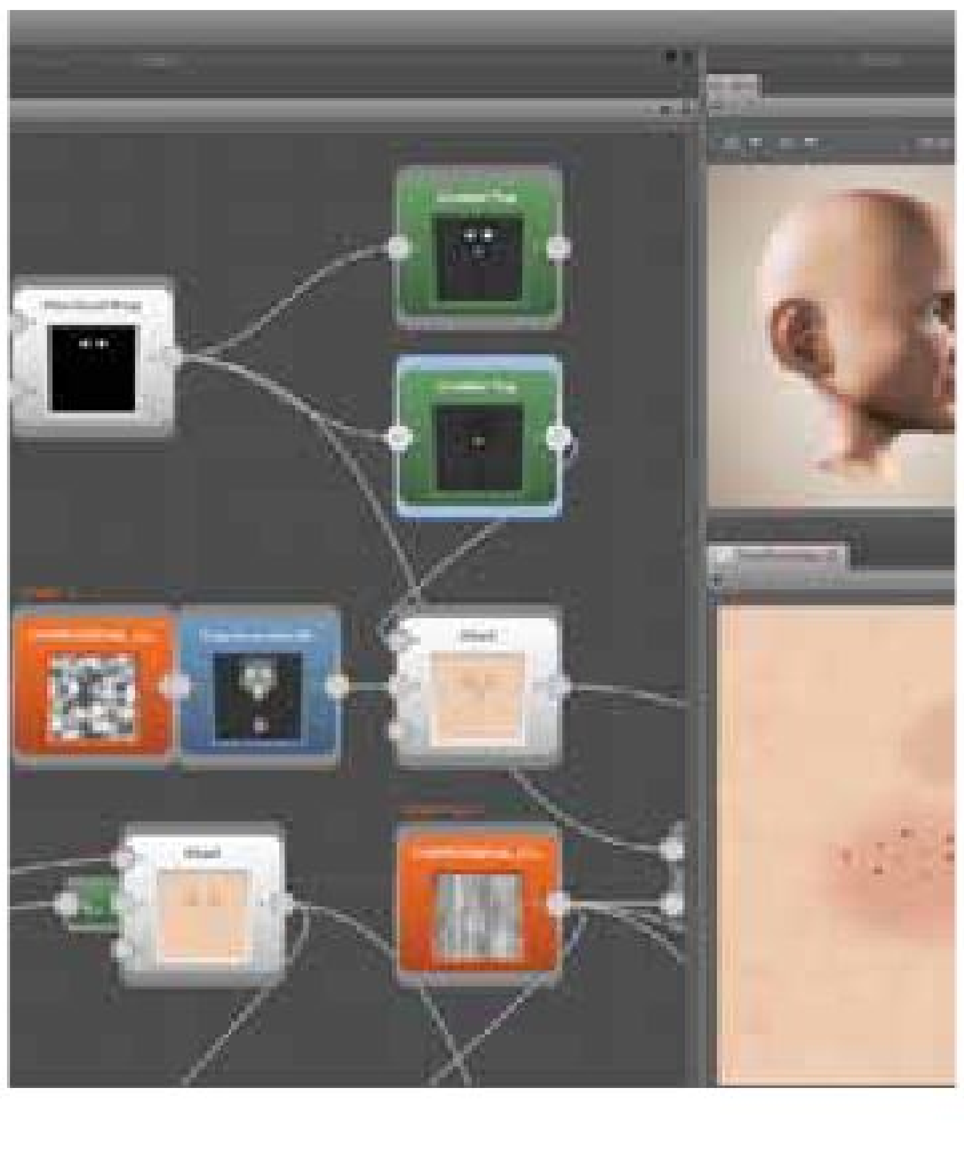
SUPPOSEDLY, A WEEK IS a long time in politics – but a year tends to be the amount of time it takes to crunch down and develop your next generation piece of gaming middleware. Or at least that's the experience of Sébastien Deguy, CEO of innovative French outfit Allegorithmic.

It was back at the Game Developers Conference 2008 that the company first started talking about Substance, its real-time procedural texture generation technology. Since then it's been working on getting the idea ready for frontline production; both in terms of nose-to-the-metal tasks such as optimising the runtime, but perhaps more importantly liaising with development partners to ensure Substance has the flexibility to fit within the various types of workflows required.

The first result will be Substance Lite, which is expected to be available mid-January. It's a replacement for Allegorithmic's breakout product ProFX, which enables you to create very lightweight textures offline using its procedural engine. Designed particularly for use with games where install size is important, such as downloadable content and MMO clients, Substance Lite offers better performance and accessibility than ProFX thanks to the new Substance architecture and graphical user interface.

As for what Deguy jokingly calls 'Substance Heavy', the plan is for a GDC 2009 launch. "We're working closely with some big names in the industry to fulfil their needs in terms of streaming data and continuously generating the textures without impacting the framerate," he explains. "It's a case of getting to grips with real-time constraints to ensure we have a product that fits people's needs."

The main feature for Substance is the ability to bring the advantages of lightweight textures that involve very low memory overheads into the realm of games that require streaming from physical media: effectively using the size of such textures to increase the real-time capabilities of consoles. Talking to developers has seen Allegorithmic broaden the number of ways in which Substance can be used, however: most notably in terms of mixing the traditional bitmap images with its procedural smarts.



"The ability to also use bitmaps is a way to ease the process and get artists working more efficiently," Deguy explains. "But even if it means the memory requirements of the finished graphics aren't as optimised as they would otherwise be, there's still a 93 per cent saving."

The mixing of the traditional texture pipeline with procedural techniques works well in terms of fitting into traditional ways of development too. "You have technical artists and production artists," Deguy says. "The production artists don't generally want to get deeply into the tool. They want to create."

This split has lead Allegorithmic to highlight some different ways of working with Substance. What it calls the hierarchical workflow sees one technical artist working on procedural base materials which are then composited by the production artists. Alternatively, artists can start working on the base materials, which the technical artist refines throughout the production cycle; what's called the parallel workflow. A final option is non-linear working, where inherited textures are automatically updated when modifications are done on base materials.

"Most of the studios we deal with understand the value of hierarchical and non-linear ways of producing content," Deguy says. "Another advantage with this way of working is that it makes it easier to share assets between studios, so if you have a studio in Singapore producing great textures you can to use them in Montreal or London, too. You don't want them recreating yet another brick texture."

But textures aren't the only thing that Substance can be used for. Another technique that's being trialled is its use as a compositor for real-time post-processing affects. The idea came from Allegorithmic's experience with MaP Time, its plug-in for After Effects and Combustion, which applied animated noise effects to an image to create effects.

"Substance is real-time so you can handle many more complex effects," Deguy points out. "For example, you can apply effects direct to your framebuffer, which means you can create waterdrops on the screen or do blurring and depth of field. Substance is way faster than any other compositing software and it can also run on the CPU so you don't impact the framerate. Eventually, we will see see people using Substance as a real-time post-processing engine, which I think is very exciting."

www.allegorithmic.com

< AUDIO >

TIME TO LISTEN UP

Dolby's Axon plans to bring clarity to MMOG voice chat…

Dolby's Axon could bring spatial 3D sound to online communities

Dolby Axon

Price: TBA
Company: Dolby
Contact: +44 1793 842100

IN ONE WAY, IT makes complete sense that Dolby, the sound specialists which bought cinematic audio to games with the integration of Dolby Surround sound in console hardware, is targeting online gaming. After all, nothing's louder than *World of Warcraft*, right?

On the other hand, Dolby's Axon voice technology takes a very different approach compared to its previous focus on the spatialisation of 5.1 and 7.1 sound streams. In fact, Axon required something of a multi-disciplinary approach to a problem that involves managing 3D audio within virtual environments, the poor quality of gaming peripherals and working within the constraints of low latency server-client architectures.

And perhaps this switch has been the biggest challenge for the company. For while it can rely on its reputation for high fidelity audio on the client side, its competitors in the online communications space include the likes of Vivox and Teamspeak, who have more experience in terms of hosted services and network constraints.

It was for that reason that Dolby acquired Australian company Spatial Voice Corporation. It was a university start-up with a plan to improve the 3D spatial accuracy of audio in massively multiplayer online games using a server-based solution to offload some of the processing overhead from the players' computer.

"They helped us solve the network problem and enabled us to be able to move real-time voice around in a bandwidth-efficient way," says Matt Tullis, senior manager of the game segment at Dolby. "We can do a full surround sound scene as low as 16 k/bits per second per player."

Part of the reason is that Axon includes a codec that Dolby developed for handling voice. "It lets us do some processing on the client-side, as well as ensuring we're very efficient in terms of what we send for processing and mixing on the server," Tullis explains. "Basically, we minimise the number of transforms we have to calculate on the server, while the codec allows us to make the dialogue high quality at low bandwidth."

Of course, the knock-on effect is that developers who want to license Axon will also have to consider how they deal with the server-side of the technology. For companies with MMO experience, it will merely be a question of installing the software into existing data centres. Dolby has also partnered with third-party networking companies such as Terremark, GNi and Seven Group for those who are happier paying for someone else to deal with the problem.

"We view developers as partners so from our point of view, it will be a one-time license fee," Tullis says.

Similarly easing the adoption process is Dolby's decision to partner up with various middleware engines. It's already carried out integrations with Unreal Engine 3 and the BigWorld MMO engine, so users of those technologies can choose to get Axon working straight out of the box.

Tullis says the time required for custom integrations depends on exactly how you want to use Axon. Full 3D spatial integration requires a pre-process as the audio engine must be fed the world's 3D geometry. "It's like a baking step, but many games use similar data formats so it's relatively straightforward."

www.dolby.com

< AUDIO >

BIG AUDIO DYNAMITE

Audiokinetic's march on the future of game sound continues apace…

SoundSeed Impact 2008.1

Price: From $5,000 for the initial platform
Company: Audiokinetic
Contact: +1 514 499 9100

CANADIAN AUDIO MIDDLEWARE provider Audiokinetic may have launched its new SoundSeed product as a family of plug-ins for its established WaveWorks Interactive Sound Engine (Wwise), but it seems that the potential is much wider.

"At the moment, we're releasing SoundSeed through Wwise because we're looking to extend Wwise as a platform – but don't be surprised if you see SoundSeed appearing in others areas as well, maybe some game-related, maybe some not," says Jacques Deveau, Audiokinetic's program manager. "We have other options. The technology is easily adaptable for any host."

It's a significant move for the company, which has seen developers such as Rare, Ensemble, BioWare, Treyarch and Pandemic adopt its audio platform in recent years.

"The biggest challenge we have is internal technology," Deveau says. "Studios have generally invested a lot in their in-house tech so it can be an issue to get them to evaluate Wwise in the light of that. We spend a lot of time dealing with the programming team, convincing them the API is flexible enough."

As for SoundSeed, the first product to be released under the name is SoundSeed Impact, which is out in its 2008.1 incarnation together with Wwise version 2008.4. And it's already been used by Realtime Worlds.

In terms of how the technology work, it uses modal synthesis to deconstruct certain types of sounds, notably bangs, clangs and punches, in order to enable a lot of runtime variation while requiring minimal processor overhead, compared to streaming in individual sound files.

"If you consider the traditional process, people have to record a lot of different sounds. Take the example of footsteps: you'll record various types of shoes and strides on various floor materials and then spend a lot of time recording, editing and integrating the raw sounds," explains Deveau.

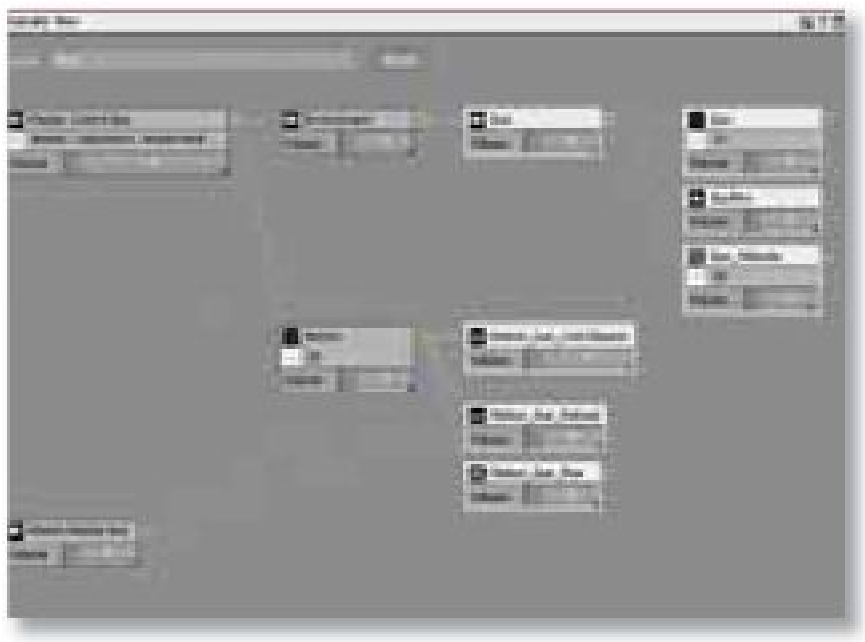
"SoundSeed works by splitting a sound – say a footstep on tiles – into a residual, or noise-only, sound, and a data model of the resonance contained in the original sound. Using the SoundSeed Modeller, you save a file containing the data model, which is effectively the recipe to rebuild the resonance in different ways by doing real-time transformations on the frequency, bandwidth and magnitude of those resonances – thus creating the variation."

Of course, this does require care to be taken with respect to the original sound source, and modal synthesis is more effective when applied to some types of sound than others: after all, that's the reason the first SoundSeed release is called Impact.

Deveau says future plug-ins will likely use different techniques. "We're considering other modules now but we probably won't be looking to use modal synthesis for the next product," he says. "We're researching other technologies, perhaps even true synthesis where we wouldn't use wave files at all, which requires even less memory overhead."

And in future, he points out that as with graphics, the trend for game audio will be the increasing use of procedural generation. "We now have the CPU power available to do things like physical modelling," he enthuses. "I think five years down the line, we'll start to see these sort of things appear in games, especially in terms of techniques such as physics-driven audio." Sounds like low overhead, big impact audio is here to stay.

www.audiokinetic.com



Building the perfect

Optimising and automating all those boring, mundane and time-consuming build, management and production processes will give you more time for the fun stuff, reckons **Jon Jordan**…

It would be going too far to say the technology we've brought together under the somewhat loose term 'source, build, management and process tools' is becoming sexy in the way that engines somehow effortlessly seem to be. What is certain is that really smart developers are spending more time ensuring they have a rock-solid framework in this area.

The reason is simple. The level of efficiency required if you hope to get your game project completed on time, on spec and on budget can only be met if you know what your dozens or hundreds (delete where appropriate) of developers are doing.

The problem with this, particularly from a management point of view, is akin to Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. Too often, the act of trying to observe what's going in destroys what's going on. To that degree at least, project status and project momentum cannot both be known.

And that's where lightweight tools such as Perforce and Hansoft come into play. By allowing the common-or-garden developers to get on with their tasks in an as unencumbered way as possible, the more confidence managers can have in their higher level tracking. Yes, maybe it's time to finally ditch the Post-It notes.

PERFORCE

TECHNOLOGY:
Perforce 2008.1

CLIENTS:
Activision, BioWare, EA, Epic, Midway, Monolith, Remedy, Sony, THQ, Ubisoft, amongst others

PLATFORMS:
Windows, Linux, Mac OS X, Solaris (clients)

INTEGRATION WITH
3ds Max, Maya, Office, Photoshop, XSI

COST:
From $900 per user

CONTACT:
+44 845 345 0116

Perforce is the industry-standard for coders

www.perforce.com

The industry-standard package for source control (aka software configuration management), Perforce features a centralised repository for assets, which are accessed by client software, including users operating from remote locations or those with irregular internet access. It's designed to operate as seamlessly as possible, and is scalable in terms of being able to handle terabytes of data and thousands of users.

SOFTIMAGE

TECHNOLOGY:
Alienbrain 8.2

CLIENTS:
Bizarre Creations, Blizzard, Codemasters, id, EA, Rockstar, Sega, Sony, THQ, Ubisoft

PLATFORMS:
Windows, Linux, Mac OS X (clients)

INTEGRATION WITH
3ds Max, Maya, Photoshop, Visual Studio, XSI

COST:
Starter pack from £12,000

CONTACT:
+44 1404 831715

Alienbrain is designed to enable artists to get in on the act

www.softimage.com

Designed as an asset management for artists, Alienbrain uses a central server to store assets and data. It handles version control and enables you to add non-destructive annotations, while tracking tools mean leads and managers can easily review a project's progress.

Integration is provided with most 3D art packages, and the latest service pack adds supports for such 64-bit applications, as well as a 64-bit SDK.

MOGWARE

TECHNOLOGY:
Mog Complete

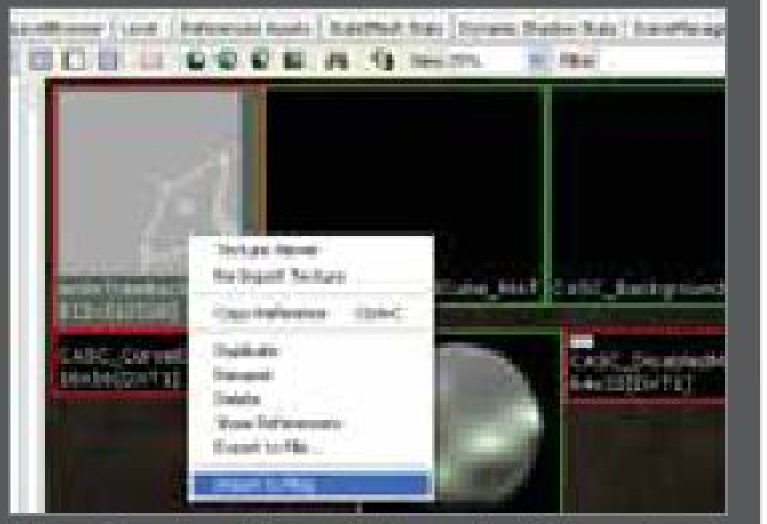
CLIENTS:
Bioware, Glyphx Games, Sensory Sweep, Trilogy Studios, amongst others

PLATFORMS:
Windows (2000/XP, Vista)

INTEGRATION WITH
Unreal Engine 3, DAZ 3D

COST:
$799 Complete, $199 Library

CONTACT:
info@mogware.com



Mog Complete feature three pipeline tools

www.mogware.com

Mog Complete is a suite of individual server-based collaborative products designed to streamline data management and production workflow. Mog Pipeline provides the ability to automate data conversion processes; Mog Library is a lightweight version control system for artists; while MogBox is a processing chain that uses a visual flowchart-style interface to enable you to handle and automate complex data conversion.

beast

HANSOFT

TECHNOLOGY:
Hansoft v5.2

CLIENTS:
Blitz, CCP, Creative Assembly, EA, Eurocom, Ninja Theory, Red Mile, Starbreeze, Ubisoft

PLATFORMS:
Windows (2000/XP, Vista)

INTEGRATION WITH
Available through SDK

COST:
€25 per user per month,
€33 server fee per month

CONTACT:
+46 18 10 90 90

Hansoft is great for tracking agile methods

www.hansoft.se

Swedish tools provider Hansoft continues to pick up high profile clients for its real-time production management tool.

The latest version of Hansoft beefs up the QA functionality, with better integration for agile development a particular focus. The tool supports different agile methodologies such as Scrum and eXtreme Programming, enables remote working with 256-bit encryption, and allows you to set up various hierarchical planning processes.

XOREAX

TECHNOLOGY:
IncrediBuild v3.31

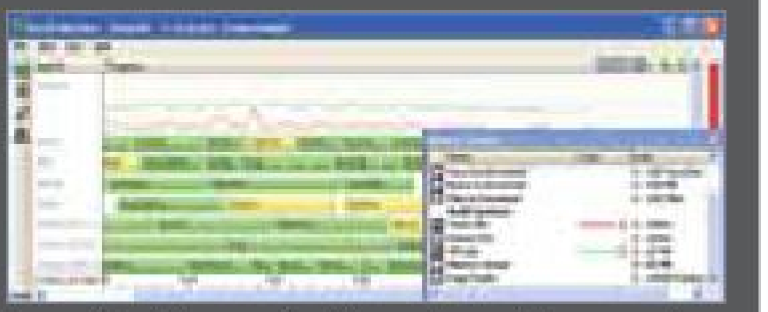
CLIENTS:
Over 300 including Big Huge Games, Codemasters, Crytek, DICE, id, Relic, Ubisoft

PLATFORMS:
Windows

INTEGRATION WITH
Visual Studio 6.0, .NET and 2005 platforms

COST:
$349 per client license

CONTACT:
sales@xoreax.com

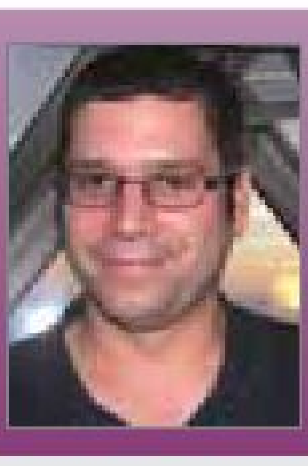


IncrediBuild uses distributed parallel processing

www.xoreax.com

Based around distributive or grid computing, IncrediBuild is a technology you can use to speed up heavy-duty processing tasks such as Microsoft Visual Studio builds, art and AI preprocesses, QA scripts and other data builds. The Xoreax Grid Engine creates a virtualised, distributed parallel process across any PCs in your office. Xoreax claims build times can be decreased by up to 90 per cent using IncrediBuild.

Concurrency



by David Jefferies

Black Rock Studio

WHEN HERB SUTTER WROTE 'The Free Lunch Is Over' in early 2005, his article on multi-core programming, it seemed that a revolution in programming was on its way. Single threaded programming was dead and we were all going to have to get used to mysterious race conditions and suffocating memory management.

Then, earlier this year, Jim Wilcox published his counter-article – 'How 'bout that Free Lunch?' – where he argued, from a very PC centric point-of-view, that the revolution simply never came.

He claimed most programmers continue to write single threaded code and the gains of a multi-processor environment come from having Windows and other applications running on a separate core to your own process. He also points out that programmers get 'free' gains by using concurrent middleware such as Microsoft Windows Presentation Foundation.

So how does this relate to current generation hardware? The Xbox 360, with its three cores and unified system memory, is most similar to what Herb was originally talking about – those mysterious race conditions are all around, but if your programmers are disciplined enough then it's not too worrying.

At least, it's not worrying compared to the PS3. The PS3's co-processors can only see 256KB of RAM each, compounding the concurrency issues with a big memory management headache. The data to be processed needs to be squirted onto the Cell in tiny packets and then squirted back when it's done. This is when Herb's article really starts to bite.

I don't have any hard evidence for this, but I suspect most games leave the majority of their Cell processing up to middleware such as Havok or FMOD and do their main game processing in a single threaded manner, perhaps using one of the Cell co-processors for easy-to-parallelise modules such as particles. In other words, most of us are doing what Wilcox claims.

For those of us that are trying to utilise the Cell it really all comes down to memory management. If we can organise our data into discrete chunks suitable for processing by a Cell co-processor, and we can guarantee that no other code is going to access that data, then it's plain sailing. Of course, that's the difficult bit – especially when you've got a tonne of legacy library code scattering reads and writes all over the address space.

So we've written a protected memory class that gathers all the data needed by a module, and with all reads and writes going through it's interface we can assert if the memory is being accessed at the wrong time. At this point it's important to get the migration strategy right: we're never going to convert our whole codebase at once and, indeed, some of it – such as HUD and game logic – isn't suitable for this scheme at all.

We identify suitable candidates for concurrency using the profiler and then bit by bit, class by class, module by module we move our code over to it. Looks like Herb was right after all.

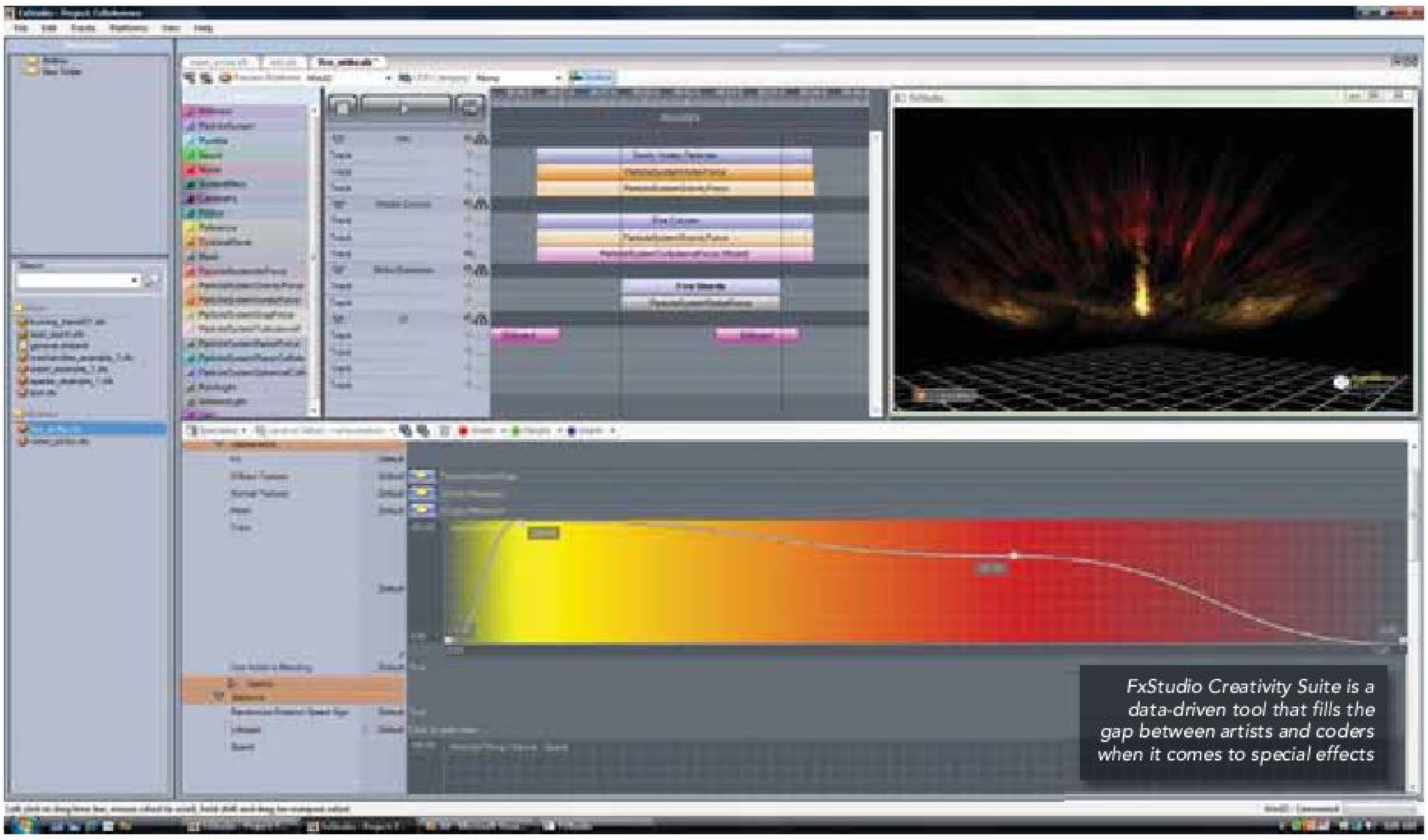
www.blackrockstudio.com

KEYRELEASE

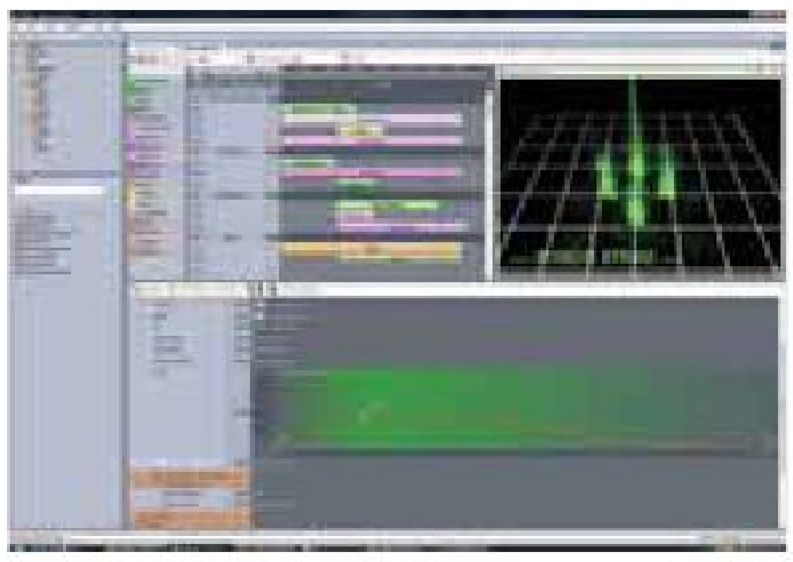
PRODUCT: FxStudio Creativity Suite
COMPANY: Aristen
PRICE: Available on request
CONTACT: sales@aristen.com
www.fxstudio.com

Something from nothing?

Aristen hopes its new FxStudio special effects suite will kick-start interest in an overlooked area of games technology, discovers **Jon Jordan**…



FxStudio Creativity Suite is a data-driven tool that fills the gap between artists and coders when it comes to special effects



By their very definition, special effects need to be special. According to Toby Gladwell and Andy Kaplan of Seattle-based middleware startup Aristen however, too often there are too many other priorities for developers. The result can be ordinary effects; more D'oh!FX than SFX.

Over the years, that's something they've experienced and now it's something they want to change. Gladwell was a co-founder and ten-year veteran of Monolith Productions, which was where he meet up with Kaplan. Both eventually moved on, respectively becoming a lead tools engineer and a producer for the likes of Sierra Online and Secret Lair Studios. Since May 2007, they've been Aristen's CTO and CEO.

"Special effects are a problem for every game team. You'll probably have a team of world builders but maybe only one effects engineer, and the sad reality is that individual generally gets thrown into place at the end of the project. The dilemma is that everyone knows they need cool stuff in their game – but how do you marry the technology with the artists?" Kaplan questions.

That's where the company's FxStudio Creativity Suite comes into play. Currently available for PC and Xbox 360 and also now shipping as part of Emergent's Partner Program for Gamebryo – with PlayStation 3 and Wii are on the way – this cross-platform system consists of a runtime and various other components, enabling you to bridge that gap as seamlessly as possible.

"We looked at the market and saw there was no off-the-shelf system. There's no Photoshop for special effects," Kaplan points out. "That's what FxStudio is: a generic solution that addresses the problem of how you get effects up and running in your game while giving artists the tools they need to really express themselves."

> ***"There's no Photoshop for special effects. That's what FxStudio is…"***
>
> ***Andy Kaplan, Aristen***

Built as a data-sequencing engine, with tools and runtime and processing parts, FxStudio handles cross-platform development both in terms of the specific file formats required and also by enabling artists to tweak the quality of their effects for the different capabilities of the platforms. The processor can be integrated into the automated build systems that are becoming increasingly popular with developers too.

"If you want to increase the number of particles or emitters for a particular platform, you can select an individual property within a component and tweak it on a platform level and the processor will pick out just the properties relating to that specific build," Gladwell explains.

The basic effects themselves are created in the runtime, while artists work in Designer, a special effect time-based sequencing tool that can be integrated within standard world building tools. For example, in the case of Gamebryo, it's integrated within the Scene Designer so effects can be placed directly in the world. And there's a preview tool, which enables real-time iterative polishing on the target platform.

But where Aristen expects FxStudio to demonstrate its value is the synergy it enables. "Traditionally, developers start off getting some particle effects going but then an artist will say they want to key some sounds or maybe flash the screen or rumble the joystick and suddenly, it's become a layering problem," Gladwell says. "Art and engineering need to be working together to figure these things out. What our technology embraces is the ability to wrap any effect – shaking the camera, triggering a sound – in FxStudio so it can be exposed to the artist and then driven by the tool."

The early feedback the company's gained has been promising in this respect. "We've only been to two shows – GameFest and the Austin Game Developers Conference – but we've got over 30 companies evaluating the product including some big publishers," Kaplan reveals.

Still, as he also points out, FxStudio remains a new product and there's a fair amount of market education required. "Our challenge is to prove to people this is a viable product: to let them know there's an off-the-shelf solution for special effects because up to this point everything's been done in-house. Our competition is internal development."

Special effects building blocks

As tends to be the case when it comes to integrating runtimes, FxStudio ships with a reference application and a palette of components that represent what a developer might do within their own engine. All the source code for those components is also provided.

"The problem with special effects is often you're dealing with existing technology," says Toby Gladwell. "Teams have usually made a large investment in their systems and they'll likely have loads of cool stuff in place, so when we created FxStudio, we made sure it would sit well with existing technology."

For that reason, the reference application and source code is designed to spark developers' imaginations. "We provide them as an example of how to composite different modules to create an effect experience. Then it's up to the engineers and artists to evaluate their own engine and consider how they would create their own versions," Gladwell says.

create something original.

Remember when you were just starting out in the games industry, and work was all about fun?
Remember that feeling of pride when you had an idea that pushed the boundaries?
When you were part of a team of great people who made original, creative things happen?
Want to recapture that spirit?

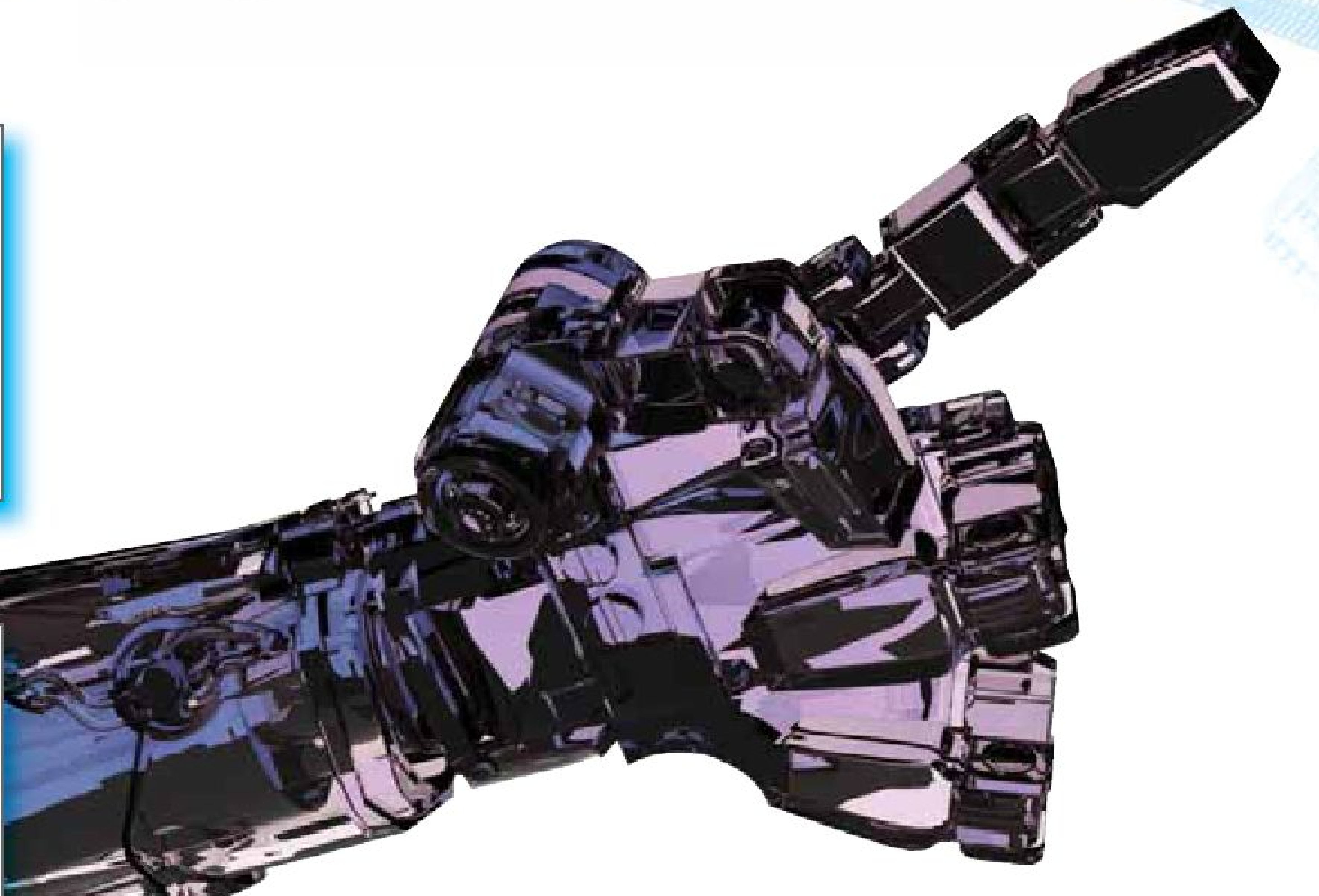
We are looking for experienced and talented artists, programmers and a senior production manager.
To find out more visit: www.playboxgames.com

playbox™

www.playboxgames.com

hands on technology

professional gaming hardware for professional gaming programmers



Subsidies for Universities, Educational Establishments and Development Studios

SITECOM
EXPANDING POSSIBILITIES

SPEEDLINK

NOVA

ROCCAT
SET THE RULES

steelseries
professional gaming gear

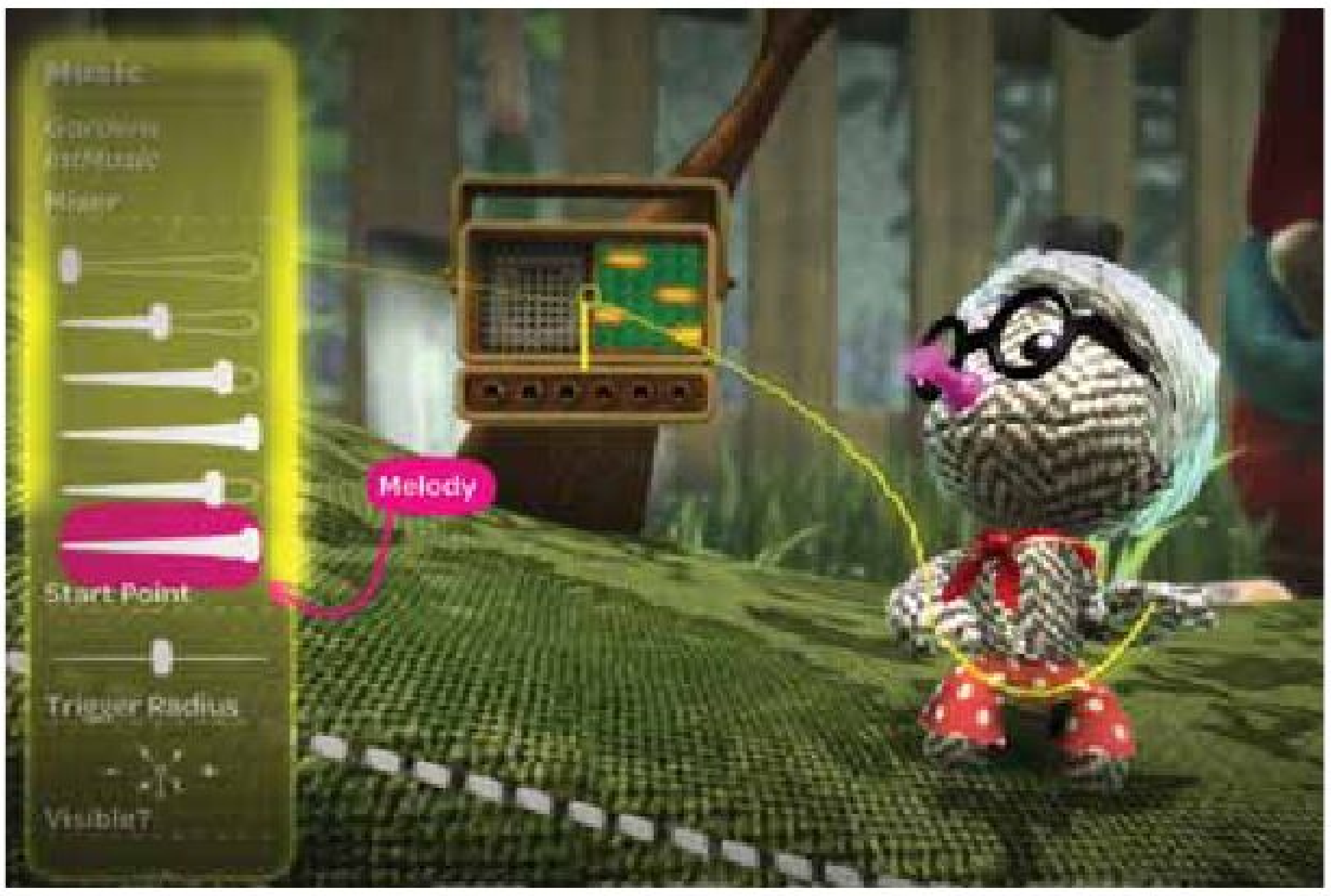
MERONCOURT
EUROPE LIMITED

Such Close | Works Road | Letchworth Garden City | Hertfordshire | SG6 1JF
T: +44 (0) 1462 680060 | F: +44 (0) 1462 677142 | E: s.walsh@meroncourt.com
W: www.trade.meroncourt.co.uk

HEARDABOUT

LittleBigPlanet

Media Molecule's Kenny Young talks to **John Broomhall** about designing the audio for its bric-a-brac world adventure…



DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER:
Media Molecule/SCEE

THE AUDIO TEAM:
Audio design: Kenneth Young
Audio programming: Matt Willis
Original music: Mat Clark (Sonica Studios), Kenneth Young, Daniel Pemberton
Additional sound implementation: Dominic Smart
Tutorials recorded and mixed at: Side UK

THE NUMBERS:
- Sound FX: 1225 files
- Music: 133 minutes – 21 licensed tracks, nine bespoke interactive tracks, five bespoke linear tracks

The hugely anticipated *LittleBigPlanet* presented a fascinating but challenging brief for its key audio designer, Kenny Young. Essentially a physics-based platformer supporting up to four players, it features a sandbox/level editor for players to create and share levels with a global community. Young's main concern was facilitating good-sounding user-generated levels, striking a balance between automatic audio handling and player control.

"If a child makes a pretend aeroplane out of random bits and pieces, *Blue Peter*-style, the sounds of the engine obviously don't come from the model but are added by the child either in the 'mind's ear' or by realising sounds vocally," he explains. "We connect with this intuitive concept in *LittleBigPlanet* so that similarly, whilst we automatically score all the 'real' game events with sound – background ambiences and physics audio, for example – we leave the player to add sound and music to their 'imaginary' self-created worlds."

Of all the automatically handled sound, physics audio attracted the greatest development effort. The team abandoning a look-up matrix approach in favour of a rule-set which determines what sample to play when two objects collide. It takes into account relative velocity, size and 'hardness' of materials in collision.

"An unspecific, generic set of physics audio samples would normally be insufficient to deal with the vast number of meshes in a game, but the amorphous nature of the craft materials in LBP really lends itself to this method," he says.

> **"We evaluated licensed music purely on its chemistry with the game rather than subconsciously-biased personal opinions and tastes…"**

"It increases the perceived plausibility of the physical interactions in the game and also informed the creation of the samples themselves. For some of the more exotic meshes I did have to create more specific sample sets – there are 30 different physics audio material types in the game.

"We also deploy material-specific 'group behavior' loops, the volume of these being analogous to the number and persistence of a particular material's on-screen collisions. These are rather abstract sounds given what is happening on-screen, but successfully score chaotic scenes by adding the stressing sounds of deterioration. For example, large numbers of wood impacts will result in the addition of a splitting, tearing wood sound."

Despite the focus on content generated by its users, players are unable to import their own music or sound files into the game, Young adds. "In addition to serious copyright concerns, we felt there was also a quality bar to maintain – a factor that's strongly influenced the design of the audio objects. For example, we keep control of the fall-off, trigger zone and volume of sound objects."

Instead, players select from several preset sound FX categories, each represented visually by a little sound object which they can just stick into their level. Playback can be triggered by proximity, switches, impact or when destroyed. "It's just as easy to add music," he adds. "Put down one of the little ghetto blasters and the music will start playing when a Sackperson walks past it. Simple, effective and flexible."

Surround sound is used subtly with stereo b/g ambiences and interactive music phantom-surround panned. Distant spot effects are increasingly panned to the rear, attenuated in volume and low-pass filtered as they get further away providing a world-wrapping immersive effect.

Music-wise, the brief for original music was to provide the player a library of reusable bespoke tracks taking in key influences from world music through mash-ups to seventies kids' TV shows. "Perhaps the most significant constraint placed on music composition was writing and producing music to work with, and take advantage of, the layered interactive music system – effectively handing over control of the mix to the end user is a brave step.

"A significant part of the the *LittleBigPlanet* sound is the use of great instrumentalists. All the interactive tracks feature live performances to some degree, and composer Mat Clark's confidence in the players to improvise has resulted in quite a jazzy score – there's some hot playing on some of those tracks."

When it came to licensed music, Young says that he was determined to hunt for something fresh, taking his cue from the 'journey-around-the-world' nature of the game. "It gave me the excuse to dictate that the music must come from specific countries – no exceptions. This forced us to evaluate the music purely on its chemistry with the game rather than allow choices based on emotionally charged, subconsciously-biased personal opinions and tastes. I'm thrilled that reviews and fans alike have highlighted the role that this eclectic music mix plays in their love of *LittleBigPlanet*."

John Broomhall is an independent audio director, consultant and content provider
develop@johnbroomhall.co.uk
www.johnbroomhall.co.uk

Gamebryo Powers

SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION® REVOLUTION™

EMERGENT GAME TECHNOLOGIES

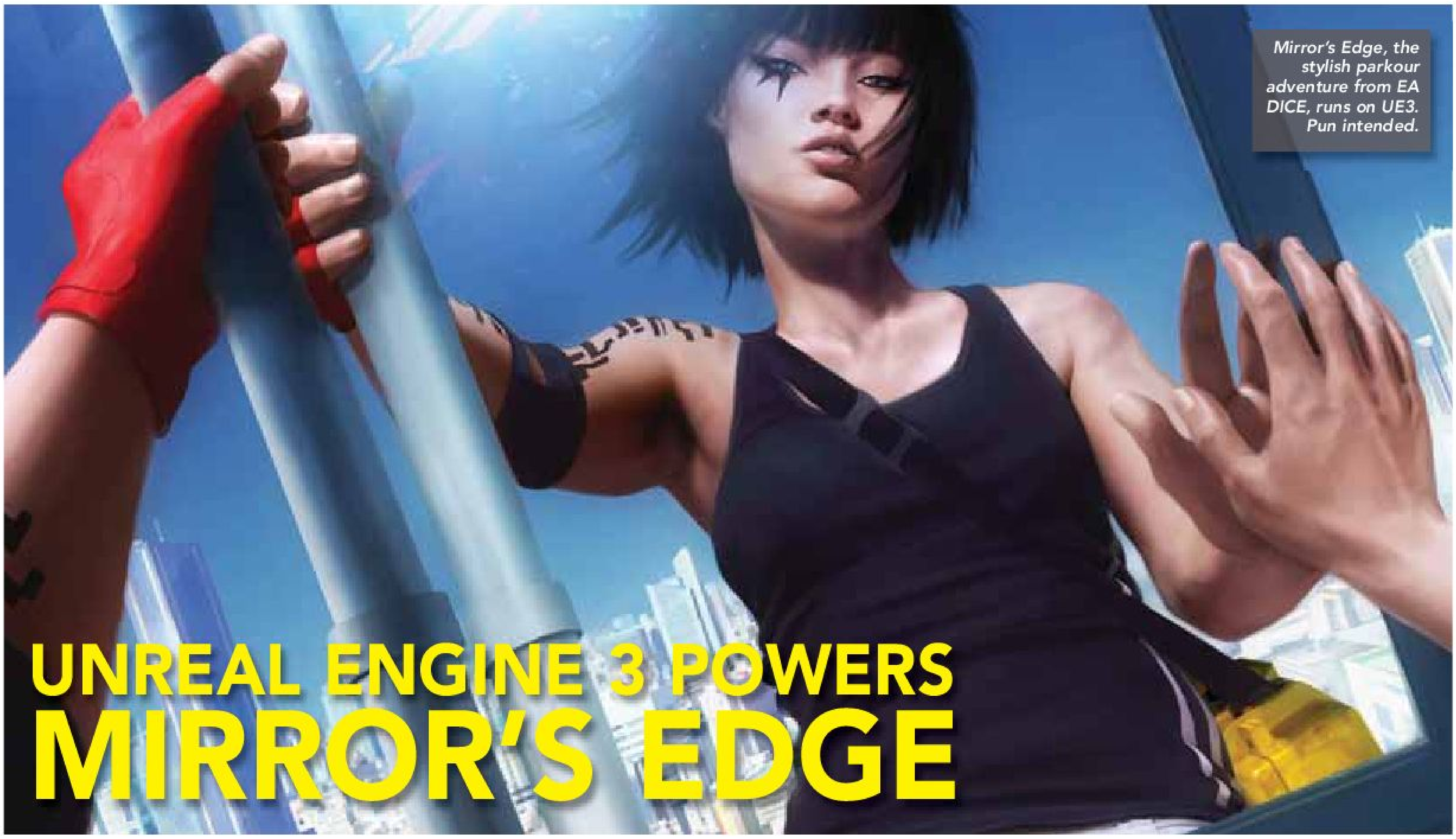
XBOX 360

Tools & Middleware PLAYSTATION 3

FIRAXIS GAMES

2K GAMES

© 2005-2008 Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc., and its subsidiaries. Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution, Civ, Civilization, 2K Games, the 2K Games logo, Firaxis Games, the Firaxis Games logo and Take-Two Interactive Software are all trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Take-Two Interactive Software, Inc. Used with permission. "Playstation" and "PS" Family logo are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. Microsoft, Xbox, Xbox 360 and the Xbox logos are trademarks of the Microsoft group of companies.



Mirror's Edge, the stylish parkour adventure from EA DICE, runs on UE3. Pun intended.

UNREAL ENGINE 3 POWERS MIRROR'S EDGE

The following is an excerpt of a story written by John Gaudiosi for www.unrealtechnology.com.

Electronic Arts-owned Digital Illusions (DICE) is redefining the first-person shooter with *Mirror's Edge*. The sci-fi action game puts players in control of a runner named Faith who must deliver messages to and from people who live on the edge of a society that has become controlled by a strict government regime.

Every move in the game, whether it's running, jumping, climbing or shooting, comes to life through a first-person perspective courtesy of Unreal Engine 3.

"Epic had been developing *Unreal Tournament 3*, so I think we came along at the right time," said Owen O'Brien, senior producer. "A lot of the PS3 support came in when we needed it. From that respect, Unreal Engine 3 gave us a good cross-platform base."

According to O'Brien, DICE chose Unreal Engine 3 two years ago because the team was going to be innovating more on gameplay than on technology, so they needed a stable engine that could handle fast iterations. DICE blended Unreal Engine 3's tools with its own animation and lighting system, which was created in tandem with Sweden's Illuminate Labs.

"Illuminate Labs adapted their Turtle lighting system for Unreal and we call that 'the beast,'" explained O'Brien. "The engine allows us to do soft shadows and light bouncing, and it gives *Mirror's Edge* a really unique look, especially since the game is based so much on white and the primary colors. The shadows and lighting are very important to the game."

The unique look of *Mirror's Edge*, which has received critical buzz from gaming media, is the result of years of experimentation. By choosing Unreal Engine 3, DICE was able to hire level designers from the Unreal development community. Thanks to the ease of use, the engine opened up new freedoms for level designers, who were able to achieve things once relegated to programmers.

"We'd been prototyping for a long time trying out things with the field of view and the movement and the animation rig, and we just needed something stable that we could keep hammering on," said O'Brien. "Using UE3 made it easier for us to hire people because a lot of people know Unreal and have worked with the engine. Recruiting talent quickly was attractive to us."

According to Tom Farrer, producer of *Mirror's Edge*, the impetus behind the game was to create a first-person game set in an urban environment that could replicate third-person perspective action like that seen in Ubisoft's *Prince of Persia* games.

"We focused on the through-the-character experience, rather than through-the-gun," said Farrer. "We wanted to give a sense of physicality and let people know they can use their legs and arms to reach up and grab something or climb up something."

The game employs a momentum-based system for the more action-oriented chase sequences, which allows players to better navigate the city environment at a quick pace. The skill element of the game comes from the timing of Faith's many moves.

"*Mirror's Edge* is an action-adventure game, but it's from a perspective that you haven't seen before," added O'Brien. "I think people think of Unreal as a good first-person shooter engine because up until now all first-person games have been shooters. We're going to change that perception."

With multiple teams across EA developing games on Unreal Engine 3, O'Brien said 'the beast' is already being employed by several EA LA teams.

"Unreal Engine 3 is used quite a lot at EA, and we always share knowledge across teams," said O'Brien. "We take things from other studios, whether it's optimisations for PS3 or other technology. That's one of the benefits of being at a company like EA."

UPCOMING EPIC ATTENDED EVENTS:

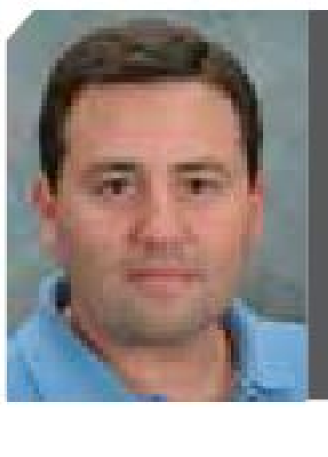
D.I.C.E. Summit
Las Vegas, NV
February 18th-20th, 2009

Game Developers Conference
San Francisco, CA
March 23rd-27th, 2009

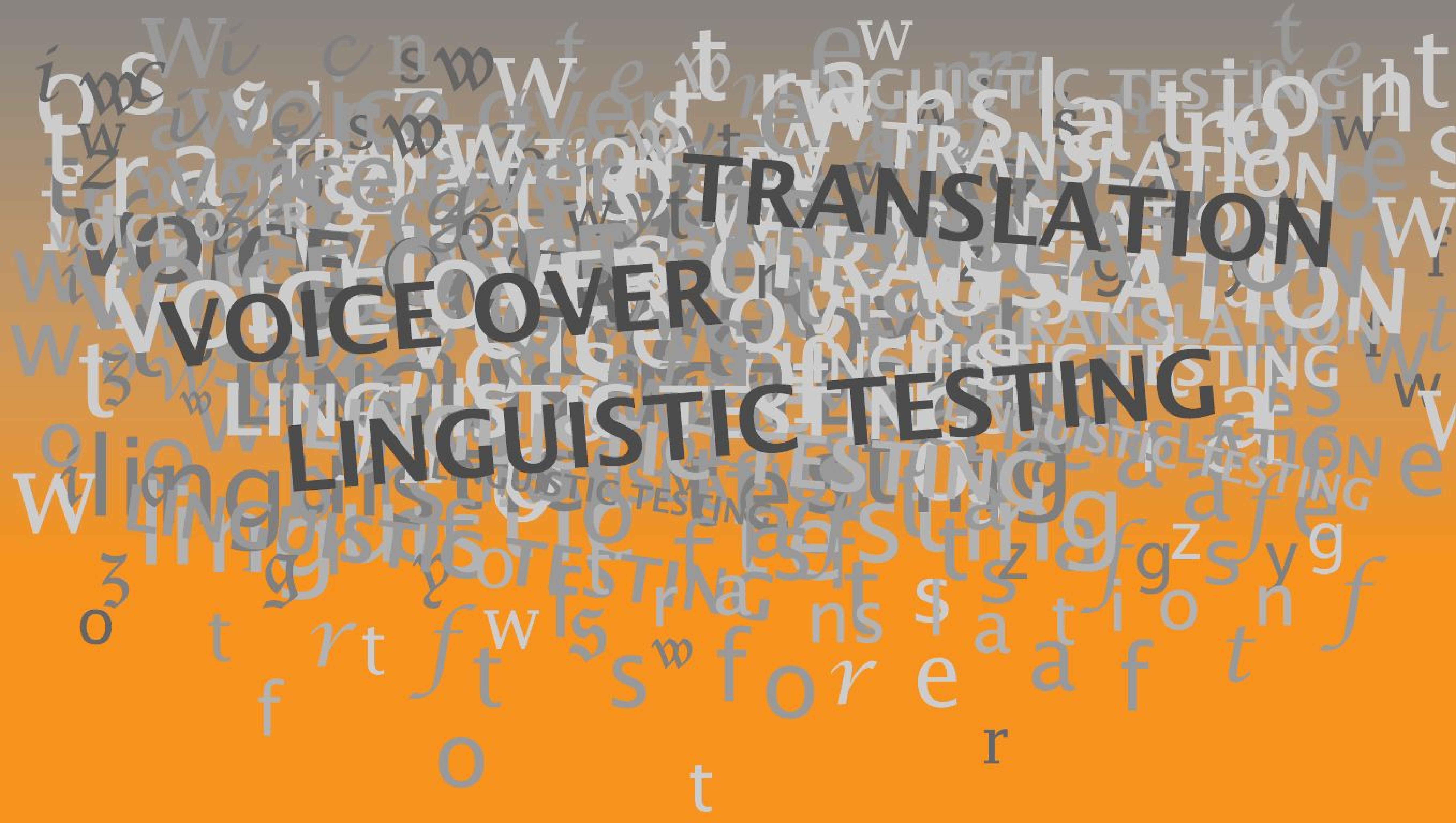
Please email:
mrein@epicgames.com
for appointments.

To discuss anything raised in this column or general licensing opportunities for Epic Games' *Unreal* engine, contact:
mrein@epicgames.com

FOR RECRUITMENT OPPORTUNITIES PLEASE VISIT:
www.epicgames.com/epic_jobs.html



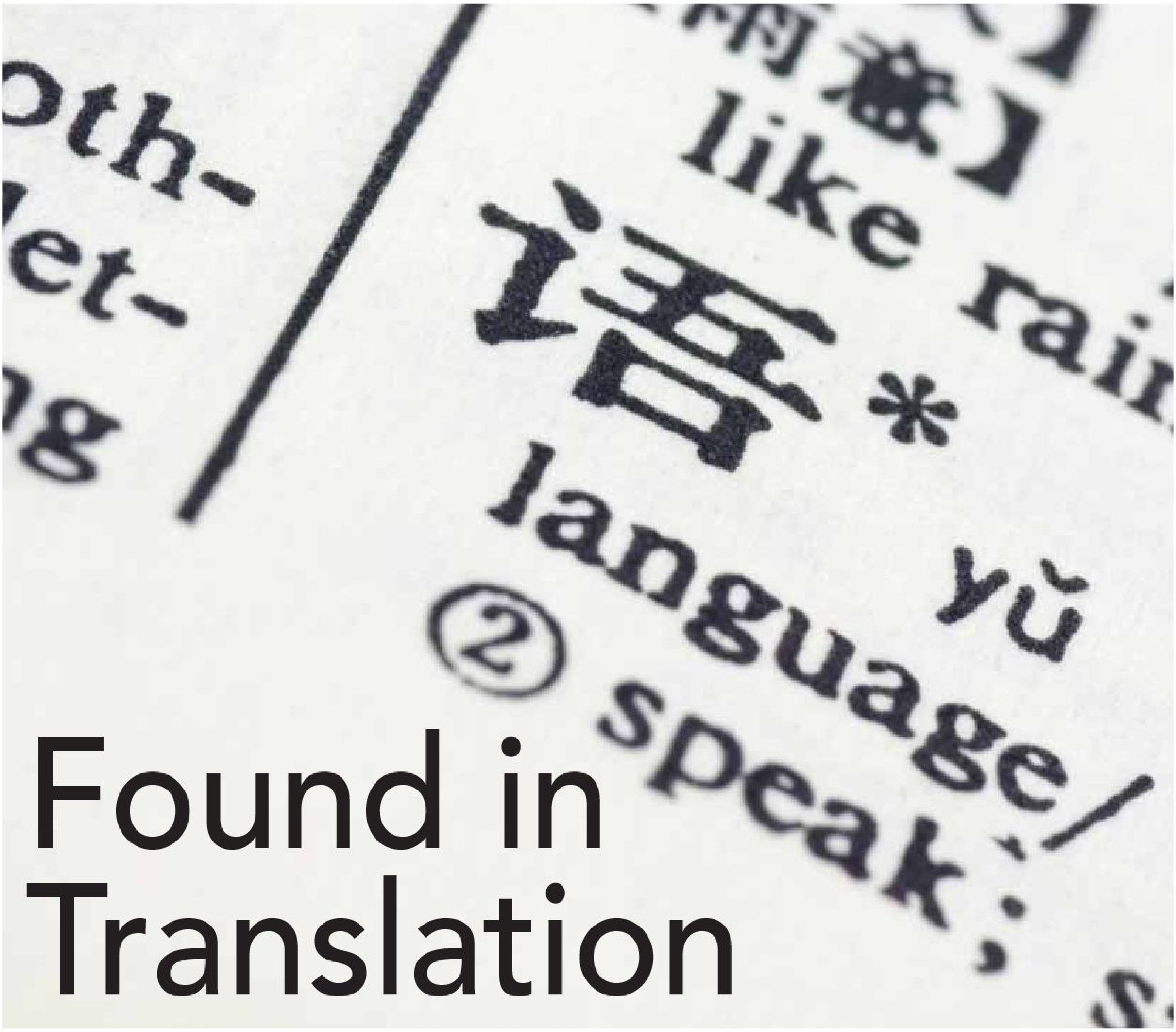
***Mark Rein** is vice president of Epic Games based in Raleigh, North Carolina. Since 1992 Mark has worked on Epic's licensing and publishing deals, business development, public relations, academic relations, marketing and business operations.*


TRANSLATION
VOICE OVER
LINGUISTIC TESTING

Relax.
We take care of it.

orange studio
software localization agency

info@orangestudio.it www.orangestudio.it
via frassinago 27 › 40123 bologna italy › tel +39 051 5880450 › fax +39 051 5880451



Found in Translation

It's boom time for the QA and localisation sector as gaming heads further into the mainstream. **Christopher Dring** speaks to the specialists on the ever-changing face of quality assurance…

The discovery of Qur'an references in *LittleBigPlanet* and the game's subsequent delay was a huge blow to everyone involved. But it's also a perfect example as to why QA and localisation can be so crucial.

Get it right and nobody notices. The game sails through submission and the publisher can watch the money tumble in. Get it wrong and critics complain, consumers are left disappointed, and effigies of Sackboy are being burnt around the globe. So it's understandable that more companies are treating localisation with the importance it deserves.

"Developers seem to take localisation and QA increasingly seriously," says Testronic's service line manager Arnaud Messager. "It is common knowledge that functionality bugs generally affect end user experience, but developers seem to now have a better understanding of the negative effect localisation bugs can have on the quality of the product."

> ***"With so many casual titles released every month, translators must turn around projects at a much faster rate…"***

Despite this, QA and localisation can still be a thankless task – often performed under strict deadlines, with an ever-increasing list of requirements. Online gaming has brought with it its own jargon, naming conventions are becoming increasingly numerous, whilst next-gen games are just getting bigger, with deadlines growing tighter all the time.

Indeed the arrival of next generation consoles have brought about many new challenges, as Yan Cyr, president and CEO of Enzyme Labs, explains:

"Over the last few years QA has changed significantly because of the increased complexity brought upon the industry in the form of more varied and complex platforms," he says. "The introduction of new generation consoles has produced games with increased functionality, and therefore we must be increasingly diligent in the way we approach each project."

One of the many new aspects of next-gen gaming is the growth in downloadable content. Whether it's extra missions for *GTA IV*, a full WiiWare title such as *Lost Winds*, or a couple of extra guns in *Dead Space*, all DLC must be tested and translated before it's released – which naturally impacts the outsource specialists.

"Digital downloading has become an international business," affirms Meaning Makers' localisation manager Elena Martos. "This new global marketplace scenario poses new challenges that require new localisation practices and internationalisation techniques.

Clockwise from top left: Arnaud Messager, Elena Martos, Gabriele Vegetti, Miguel Bernal-Merino, Yan Cyr, Neil Ross, Loreto Sanz Fueyo, Keith Russell, Markus Ludolf

"Furthermore, these titles are completely different from traditional games in terms of dynamics; they also produce an ongoing stream, which obviously has an impact on localisation processes and more technical implications for translation."

It's not just downloadable content either: the casual gaming boom has also had a significant impact on the QA and localisation space. With so many casual titles released every month, testers and translators must turn around projects at a much faster rate so they can pass through Nintendo, Sony and Microsoft's vigorous checks. And, with each game targeting a different market, localisation specialists must adapt their methods to suit the needs of entirely new audiences.

> ***"Putting effort into individual territories can establish a game in a new market, opening up a new revenue stream…"***

"Casual games requires an improved linguistic accessibility," says Orange Studios' Gabriele Vegetti. "If a hardcore game allows a certain degree of technical jargon, casual gaming needs translators to better focus on their audience: often very young or old people who are probably playing for the first time. So you've got to be very attentive to detail in order to make sure the player understands what is required."

Along with casual gaming, the MMO market has also expanded significantly – and these require almost the exact opposite treatment to casual titles, as Partnertrans' Markus Ludolf, who worked on *Lord of the Rings Online*, explains:

"MMOs, especially the RPGs among them, require a completely different approach to casual gaming. What you need here is rock solid planning, a keen eye to anticipate problems before they even surface and a process that ensures quality results even with very tight deadlines."

MIND YOUR LANGUAGE

For all the changes that digital, casual and online gaming have brought to the QA and localisation space, one of the biggest growth areas has been the need to localise more games into more languages. For years the industry has mainly focused on translating games into English, French, Italian, German and Spanish (EFIGS), and even today many companies just focus on these established territories.

Yet not properly localising a title for each territory it is released in can cause its own set of problems. For example, a word in one country could mean something completely different in another. And it's not just about keeping an eye on potentially damaging words and phrases – putting effort into individual territories can establish a game (and a publisher) in a new market, opening up a new revenue stream in the process.

"We are seeing an increase in developers localising games for

SPEAKING YOUR MIND

ALTHOUGH THE relationship between developers and the localisation specialists is improving, Miguel Á. Bernal-Merino, a lecturer in media translation at Roehampton University, feels the industry should talk more openly about localisation in order to improve the quality of the finished product all around the world: "Some development teams keep making similar mistakes to those ten years back: no implementation of Unicode, translatable strings in graphic files, misrepresentation of other cultures, over-simplistic use of linguistic variables and so forth," he says.

"There is no room for this in today's globalised market place. However, since the game industry very rarely talks about localisation, it is not strange that we still have these problems.

"In an ideal future, all game fans would be able to play in their own language without experiencing rushed translations, silly linguistic bugs, truncated UI strings, or insulting cultural inaccuracies. This is the real world, but I think mistakes can be greatly minimised with a bit of planning and coordination.

"We are trying to encourage this dialogue from the IGDA Localisation SIG and with the Game Localisation Roundtable Series within Localisation World. Anyone interested in participating in the drafting of a whitepaper that could paved the way for game localisation standards is more than welcome to join us."

http://www.igda.org/wiki/Localization_SIG

US

Specialist Games Services

Localisation

- All Languages
- All Platforms
- Native Speakers
- All Assets

Quality Assurance

- All Platforms
- Localisation QA
- Compliance QA
- Functionality QA

Audio Services

- Localised Voice Overs
- Casting
- Directors
- In Territory Recordings

Thank you and Season's Greetings to all our customers for their continued support and best wishes for a successful 2009!

Universally Speaking
Priory Chambers, Priory Lane, St Neots, Cambs, PE19 2BH, UK
+44 (0)1480 210621 info@usspeaking.com

www.usspeaking.com

OUTSOURCING FOR GAMES

BABEL

Babel offers the following services for Console, PC, Handheld, Online and Mobile titles:

DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

- Game Art
- Audio
- Gameplay QA
- Functionality QA
- Compliance QA
- SCEA PLAYSTATION®3 QAAP

POST PRODUCTION SERVICES

- Translation
- Localised Audio
- Localisation QA
- Localised Compliance QA
- Print
- Mobile Handset Porting
- Mobile certification and deployment

Europe and Asia: +44(0)1273 764100
North America: +1 514-904-3700

sales@babelmedia.com
www.babelmedia.com

develop
INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

2003, 2005, 2007 and 2008

> ***"Many of our Western clients are looking at new markets – such as THQ doing Wall-E in Arabic..."***
>
> ***Keith Russel, Babel***

territories where they had previously released content in English," says Absolute Quality's Neil Ross. "The Nordic countries, Netherlands and Portugal are increasingly popular and we have scaled our teams significantly over the past year to meet this demand. Often the marginal cost of localising for these territories is far outweighed by the additional revenue and positive brand awareness from having a localised title."

Localsoft's Randall Mage agrees: "Publishers and developers realise the potential of internationalisation and are taking localisation much more seriously these days. Many publishers now have in-house localisation experts and developers are starting to go that extra mile in translating their products."

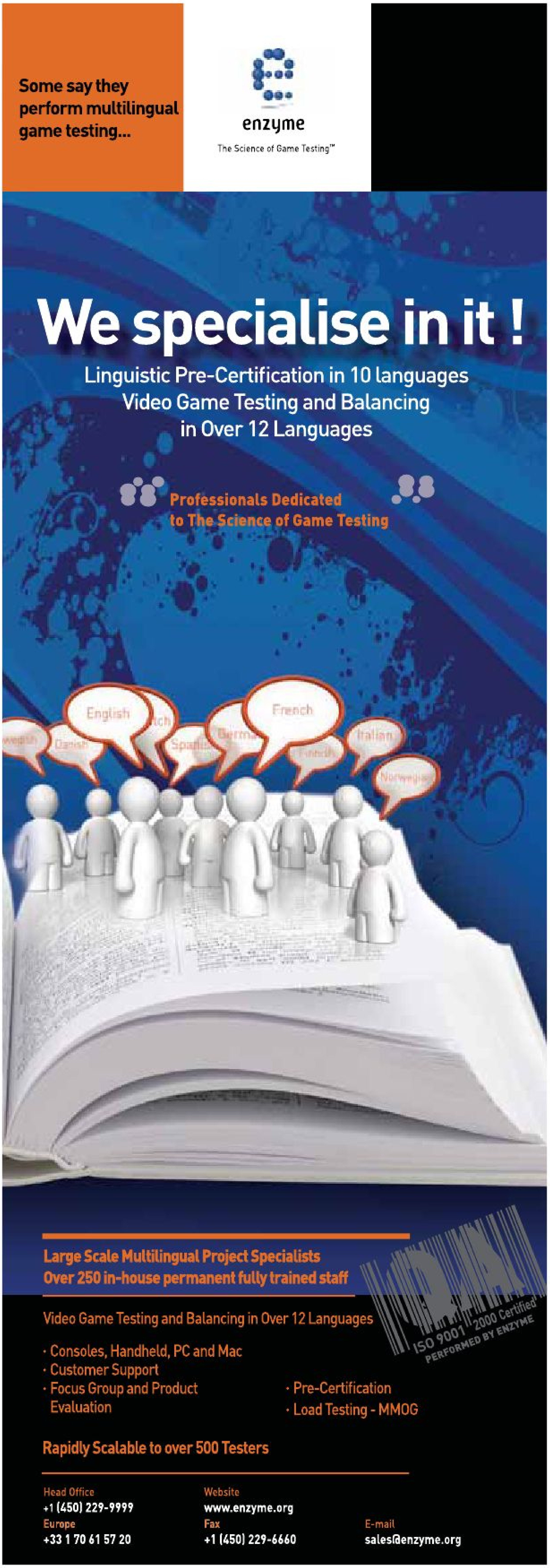
It's not just existing territories that have benefited from renewed localisation efforts. Emerging markets in Eastern Europe and the Middle East too are seeing increased attention:

"I've recently visited Japan and GStar in Korea, and all the discussions I had were with customers wanting to take their IP to Europe or the US," enthuses Babel's maketing director Keith Russell. "Similarly, many of our Western clients are looking at new markets – such as THQ doing *Wall-E* in Arabic. As IPs get more valuable, more customers understand that scrimping on the localisation just devalues the IP, especially in a new territory."

Over the past two years the QA sector has enjoyed immense growth, but despite all the changes the outsource sector remains all about the quality. "It's always good to remember that a game can always be improved," concludes Universally Speaking's project manager Loreto Sanz Fueyo. "So to all the developers out there, please allocate as much time as possible to quality assurance. More time equals more quality equals better reviews equals better sales. It's as simple as that."

QUALITY ASSURED

	Based:	**Contact:**
4-REAL MEDIA	Offenbach, Germany	+49 (0) 69 80 90 88-0
ABSOLUTE QUALITY	Glasgow, UK	+44 (0)141 220 5600
BABEL	Brighton, UK	01273 764100
CENGA SERVICE TEAM	Warsaw, Poland	+48 22 574 25 78
ENZYME LABS	Quebec, Canada	+1 (450) 229-9999 ext.312
KEYWORDS INTERNATIONAL	Dublin, Ireland	+353 (1) 523 75 34
LOCALSOFT	Spain	+34 952 92 93 94
MEANING MAKERS	Spain	+34 945 893 246
ORANGE STUDIO	Italy	+39 051 588 04 50
TESTRONIC LABS	Buckinghamshire, UK	+44 (0) 1753 653722
SERCO GAMES RESEARCH	London, UK	020 7421 6487
U-TRAX	The Netherlands	+31 30 293 2098
UNIVERSALLY SPEAKING	Cambridgeshire, UK	+44 (0) 1 480 210621


Some say they perform multilingual game testing...
enzyme
The Science of Game Testing™
We specialise in it !
Linguistic Pre-Certification in 10 languages
Video Game Testing and Balancing in Over 12 Languages
Professionals Dedicated to The Science of Game Testing

Large Scale Multilingual Project Specialists
Over 250 in-house permanent fully trained staff
Video Game Testing and Balancing in Over 12 Languages
· Consoles, Handheld, PC and Mac
· Customer Support
· Focus Group and Product Evaluation
· Pre-Certification
· Load Testing - MMOG
ISO 9001 2000 Certified PERFORMED BY ENZYME
Rapidly Scalable to over 500 Testers
Head Office +1 (450) 229-9999
Europe +33 1 70 61 57 20
Website www.enzyme.org
Fax +1 (450) 229-6660
E-mail sales@enzyme.org

Managing translation

Why should you look to an outsource company to handle your localisation? Testronic's **Tulay Tetiker** runs us through the benefits of using the specialists…

Translation is a complex activity. It requires full mastery of the source language and the ability to convey the meaning in a way that respects not only the grammatical rules of the target language but also the look and feel of the target culture. Ultimately, translation is synonym of localisation: a translation which doesn't address the local conventions will certainly fall short of its purpose.

Translating video games is no exception. A highly creative exercise by definition, translation of video games involves the recreation of the idioms, humour, energy and the overall environment intended by the game developers and publishers. In other words, translators must convey to the target audience the illusion that they are playing a masterpiece originally developed in their native countries rather than an adaptation.

This fantastic and challenging journey is, however, not short of pitfalls. Getting the basics wrong will almost certainly mean that your overall investment in localisation will be put at risk. Outsourcing translation services grants you the flexibility of having dedicated specialists with the necessary skills, processes and tools to ensure the success of your translations, whenever you need.

OUTSOURCING TRANSLATION

The practical benefits of outsourcing the translation of your game can be summarised as follows:

1. Flexible access to skilled linguists

The mood and environment of a first-person shooter is certainly different from a football management game. But which linguist is most suitable to translate and localise your games? What if you only need the translators to work on your projects for a limited timeframe? A dependable outsourcer will have processes and policies in place to hire the cream of crop, enabling you to save endless time and money in recruitment. Also, having the flexibility of being charged by the number of words, rather than on a time or contractual basis, means that you can optimise your costs to a great extent.

> ***"Translation of games involves the recreation of the idioms, humour, energy and the overall environment…"***

2. Availability of multiple language combinations

Outsourcing translation services grants you access to a wide array of language combinations and dialects on a highly flexible basis, saving you precious time and resources. A reliable outsourcer will also provide you with a consistent translation approach across different language combinations, thereby enhancing the quality of the end product.

3. Expert project management

A successful translation of video game content relies greatly on the skills and expertise of the project manager in charge. Project managers are the professionals responsible for ensuring the best translators are assigned to a specific game, the necessary tools are being used, and your guidelines (and/or third-party documentation) are being duly enforced. Project managers will liaise with translators to resolve most linguistic queries that will crop up during the translation stage, allowing you to concentrate on your core activities.

4. Risk mitigation

If you are planning to keep translation in-house, you may be able to find translators, but you may also run the risk of hiring translators who may not have terminology knowledge or are not experienced enough to translate RPGs, for example. Costs aside, experienced translators may simply not be available when you need them.

Translating video game content also involves compliance with first/third-party terminology and knowledge of specialist glossary-management tools. A single non-conformity with approved terminology will often imply an increase in submission costs, testing cycles and deferral of release dates.

File format consistency is another key element in translation workflow. Reliable outsourcers will ensure the localised assets are consistent from technical point of view throughout the translation stage, such as encoding issues for Asian languages. Before a translation starts, reliable outsources will perform a technical QA check to ascertain if all the tags in a document are correct, determine the character restriction per string and whether any special procedures need to be observed during the translation stage. If text assets are not duly verified from technical point of view, the game code can be corrupted and can cause severe issues to the developer.

Filipe Samora, translation manager at Testronic Labs thinks that outsourcing can mitigate many of the risks involved with localising games: "There are only few linguists out there who have hands-on experience translating games, and many translation agencies are not even aware of first and third-party standards and terminology.

"We have the knowledge of both worlds – we know how translation providers work and we know about developers' schedules, workflow, and the terminology standards required. Our customised workflow allows developers and publishers to concentrate on their core activities, without having to worry about the quality of the translations and compliance with first-party standards."

Publishers and developers are facing brand new challenges in the light of the economic downturn. Translation and localisation are becoming a central element in the development agenda, allowing publishers and developers to capitalise on new markets and diversify their revenue portfolio. Choosing a reliable outsourcer is, however, of paramount importance to ensure the success of multilingual video games.

www.testroniclabs.com

TESTRONIC
laboratories

Leading the way in multimedia quality assurance

Global Testing Services

Testronic Labs Games Testing is based on proven workflow, modern fully equipped laboratories and professional teams, including console, PC and online experts and native language specialists for 25 languages.

Customer service leadership is maintained through a flexible and responsive approach with a focus on Quality of Service.

Testronic Labs serve global interactive games developers and publishers from secure games testing labs at Diepenbeek Belgium, Warsaw Poland, and Pinewood Studios U.K.

- Microsoft, Sony and Nintendo Compliance testing
- Massively Multiplayer Online testing
- New Player Experience testing
- PC Compatibility testing
- Functional testing
- Usability testing
- Localization Testing

Any Content
Any Medium
Any Device

DavidHooker
SVP Sales and Marketing
Testronic Laboratories
Tel: + 44 (0) 118 979 2640
Mobile: + 44 (0) 771 277 8626
Email: david.h@testroniclabs.com

www.testroniclabs.com

TESTOLOGY Ltd.

the testosterone in test

FOR ALL YOUR QA NEEDS:

CREATIVE GAME-PLAY TESTING
FUNCTIONALITY TESTING
COMPLIANCE TESTING
COMPATIBILITY TESTING
LOCALISATION TESTING

TESTOLOGY Ltd
Suite 9, 5th Floor
Aldershot Business Centre
Victoria House, Victoria Road
Aldershot, Hants GU11 1EJ

www.testology.co.uk

Testing the boundaries

Is it too late to leave leave QA until the alpha stage? Testology's **Andy Robson** draws upon his experience to put forward the case for using testers to their full potential…

From the very start of my career in games testing QA fifteen years ago, it became quickly apparent to me that strict processes and methodologies needed to be in effect to ensure maximum productivity. Some people often remark that QA testers simply play games all day; alas, this is not our reality. In fact, it is quite the contrary.

A successful QA department is crucial when delivering milestones, stabilising builds and ultimately releasing products that live up to (or surpass) expectations. From the structure of test plans to the creation of bug templates, Testology's processes mirror those established in my early years as a QA manager. In fact, most processes we employ have withstood the incredible growth of the industry – although, as development teams and projects grew in size, so did our test plans, testing hours and the volume of bugs in the databases.

The only other variation on the projects we work on is content. We have to mould and adapt our approach when being presented with completely varying tasks, as the two case studies cited later on demonstrate. Fortunately, we don't just rely on checklists and structured tests to conduct our work. Testing relies on an eye for detail and an educated awareness of how things should work within a game: a QA tester is not only expected to run through checklists but also use unstructured investigation to find obvious bugs and also the issues that require intricate reproduction steps.

> ***"Testers can pick up on major design flaws, as well as help maintain stable builds and milestone submissions…"***

TESTING TIMES

There are numerous key qualities necessary for a successful QA team. Communication is a vital feature of our work ethics at Testology. We maintain a high level of communication through various forms: throughout the working day we would expect multiple examples of contact between our test team and production, other developmental departments and the client's points of contact. QA would be a useless tool if important information was not relayed immediately and with a high level of professionalism.

Our team is extremely passionate about the industry and this is reflected in the way they are always ready to pass on key messages regarding the testing work. This is imperative, as the daily reports we send at the end of every working day – although a great method of communication – may raise incidences that perhaps should have been flagged as soon as they occurred.

We recently experienced development testing in two very different forms. Lionhead Studios already operates a QA department which utilises its own processes and methods for conducting QA work. We were asked to provide a number of testers late on in the project – typically the most stressful period for QA – which meant that our testers were required to immediately understand and implement Lionhead's current procedures.

In contrast to the way we worked with Lionhead, we recently had to assemble and manage a test team within Media Molecule's development offices in Guildford, Surrey. This posed a different challenge, as we were entering the developer's environment and introducing our own testing methods. As always, our main priority was the client. We wanted to help *LittleBigPlanet* become the best title it possibly could and do everything within our testing power to achieve this. The main focus was ensuring that all builds were as stable as possible and milestones were met with the strongest candidates possible.

Obviously, *LittleBigPlanet* has a lot of depth within its content. We put in many hours but our team was highly motivated and passionate about the project. Staff worked tirelessly to ensure that all areas of the game and all modes, such as single- and multiplayer, were stable.

In addition to the functionality testing, experienced QA testers bring a wealth of knowledge and ideas regarding how games should play and function. We had the opportunity to deliver constructive game play feedback to design and production regarding our thoughts on all areas of the game. Media Molecule was always very willing to listen to our points, whether negative or positive, and

Media Molecule's LittleBigPlanet gave so much freedom to users that extensive testing was required

changes were often made as a result of our concerns or suggestions.

Testing has the advantage of expandability at any given time: numbers can be increased quickly, but this often comes at a cost of quality. It is a common misconception that sheer numbers in a test team will ensure that the quality of a product is sufficient. It is also a common misconception that sheer numbers alone will stabilise builds and ensure developers and publishers reach deadlines.

It is the combination of numbers and the quality of testers that will ultimately determine the service being provided. A nonchalant attitude and approach to QA can be dangerous for developers, and if the importance of QA is overlooked, products may be released without full, attentive testing coverage.

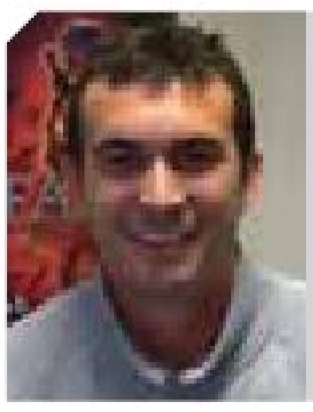
PLAYING THE GAME

A tester does not only have the ability to stabilise a product – after playing a title every day for months at a time, a tester will have a very clear impression of all aspects of the game. I think the industry undervalues the worth of a test department and misses a great opportunity to improve what they are creating. Peter Molyneux and I both shared the same mindset that QA should start well before the normal alpha to beta stages. Dev testing is vital, as major concerns can be exposed before it's too late.

Testology offers the service of gameplay consultancy, which was born from our experiences in these types of testing environments. We utilise our wealth of gameplay testing, consultancy and dev testing experience to improve our clients' games. This is an area of testing and quality that many outsourcing companies, developer and publisher test teams cannot offer. A test team should be much more than simply a QA service. At Testology we sincerely believe that our consultancy and feedback service can dramatically improve our clients' projects.

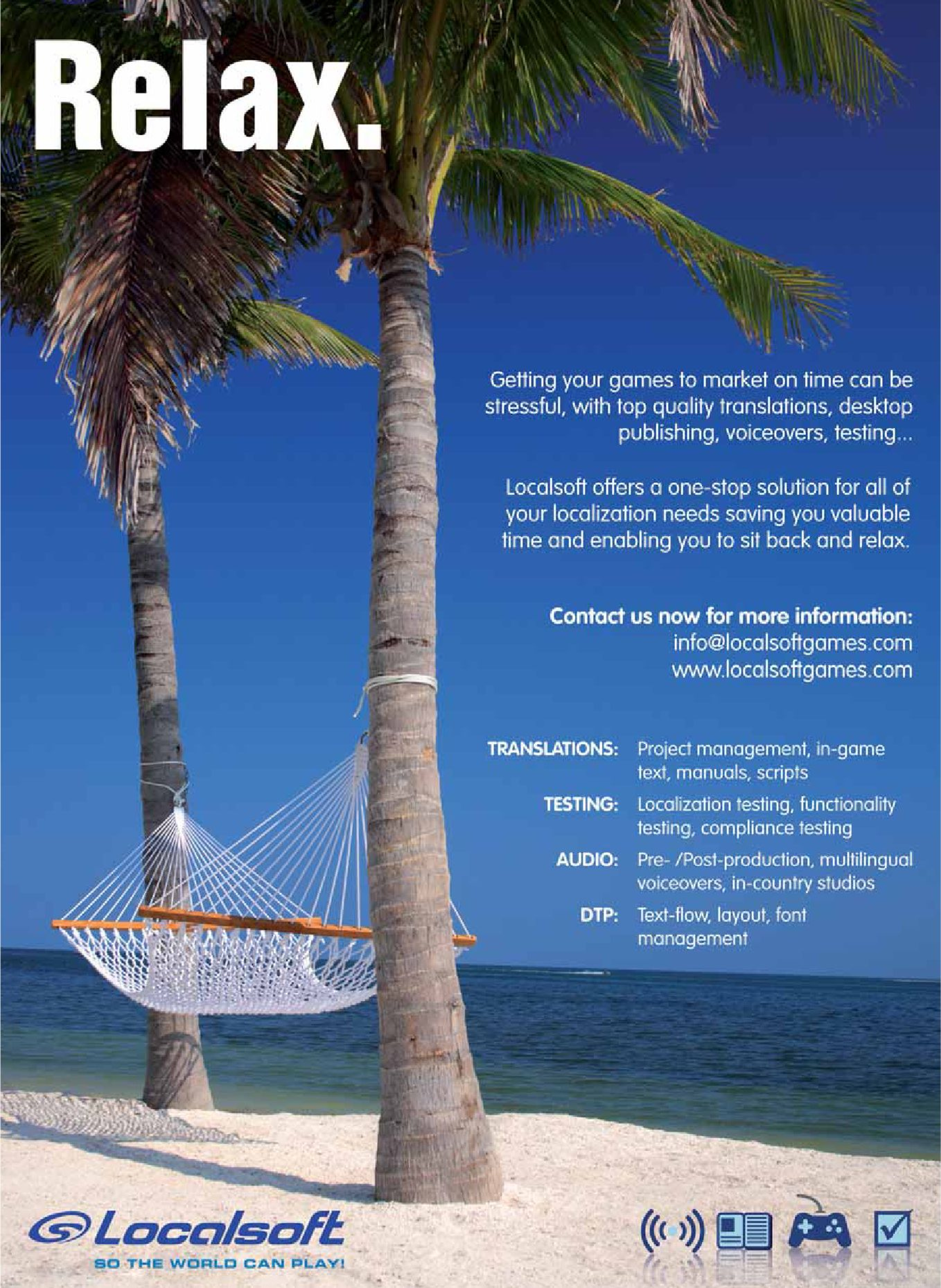
Testers can pick up on major design flaws and faults as well as assist in maintaining stable builds and helping with milestone submissions. Test teams are often called into action towards the very end of the development cycle, but this is a waste: they can offer so much more than stabilisation towards the end of projects. I believe experienced QA professionals can provide honest, passionate and constructive feedback suggestions all the way through development. For this reason Testology encourages our staff to think outside the box, taking into consideration how a game could be improved not just fixed.

www.testology.co.uk



***Andy Robson** joined Bullfrog Productions in 1994 and ran the department as head of testing. In 1998 he went on to work at Lionhead Studios before forming Testology in 2006.*

Marine monster or beauty treatment?
Customized Project Management
Multilingual Translation
Software Localisation
Multilingual Desktop Publishing
Voice Production
Implementation
Quality Assurance
Localisation Testing
MeaningMakers™
Translation is the beginning
www.meaningmakers.es



Relax.

Getting your games to market on time can be stressful, with top quality translations, desktop publishing, voiceovers, testing...

Localsoft offers a one-stop solution for all of your localization needs saving you valuable time and enabling you to sit back and relax.

Contact us now for more information:
info@localsoftgames.com
www.localsoftgames.com

TRANSLATIONS:	Project management, in-game text, manuals, scripts
TESTING:	Localization testing, functionality testing, compliance testing
AUDIO:	Pre- /Post-production, multilingual voiceovers, in-country studios
DTP:	Text-flow, layout, font management

Localsoft
SO THE WORLD CAN PLAY!

The right direction

Gone are the days where games could get away with half-hearted vocal performances. Here, director **Kate Saxon** shares her tips for developers wanting to get the most out of their recording sessions…

< AUDIO >

TUTORIAL:
VOICE DIRECTION

SKILL LEVEL
■ EVERYONE
■ INTERMEDIATE
■ EXPERT

Rosalind
You will stop this foolishness this instant!
You are a young lady, not a warrior!

Saxon's game credits include voice direction for *Dragon Quest VIII: Journey of the Cursed King*, *Age of Conan: Hyborian Adventures* and *Fable II*.

Side first discussed directing for game projects with me back in 2003. Clients were choosing to spend money on actors with 'name' credentials, but were finding they couldn't easily get the performances they were hoping for. Scripts were also becoming more complex with three-dimensional characters and dynamic, filmic storylines. Side felt that, in order to get the performances that they and their clients wanted, they needed to look further afield and talk to directors from other disciplines.

Directing games is different to theatre, but no less fulfilling. There is a true challenge in honing direction so as to achieve results quickly and effectively without compromising quality. There is an art to listening to the client, the sound engineer and the actor all at once. I need to focus my thoughts to give clear direction to the actor, choose takes for the sound engineer and check with the client that all is on track. It's exciting: there's never a second when I can afford to be anything less than fully engaged; listening, processing, distilling, and explaining with purpose for the intended result. I always imagine it must be a bit like newsreaders who have to listen to various voices in their ear at the same time as delivering the story.

One of the early projects I directed was *Dragon Quest VIII* – it provided a fantasy landscape of larger-than-life characters who nevertheless had true character arcs to follow, and so the actors could take a journey of discovery too. Having limited experience with directing for games projects meant I had to learn specific skills and industry jargon for working in the studio, but ultimately my job was the same as in the theatre. The core principle remained: to tell a story so as to entertain and enthral the audience, by communicating well with the actors and the creative team to pull all the elements together into a cohesive whole.

When directing for game projects, I focus on the core of the storytelling itself by helping actors understand the story to be told, the producers' and writers' intentions, and their audience. They can then give the most appropriate, best and (dare I say) 'inspired' performances.

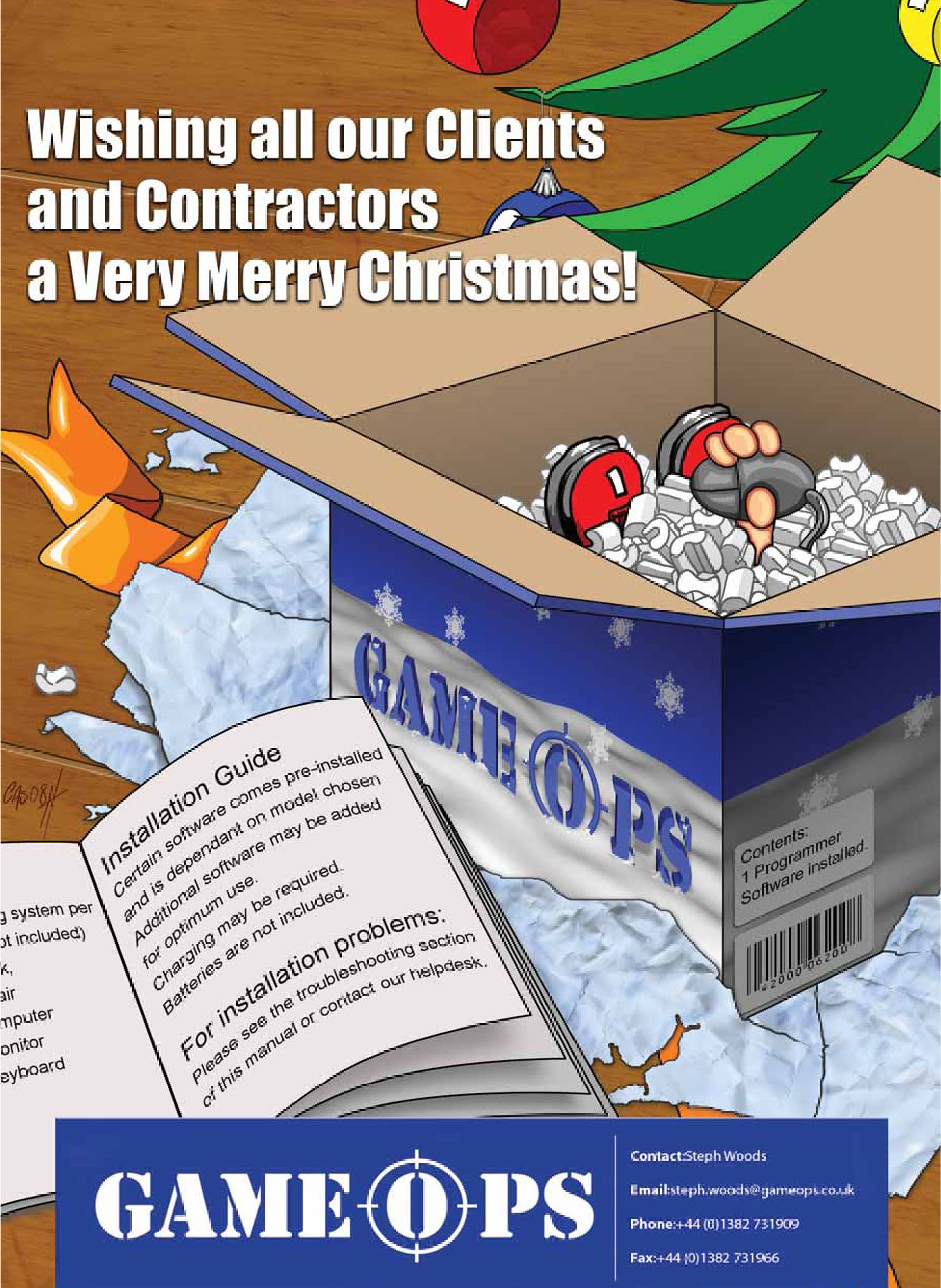
> **"Directors can be used for casting, actor suggestions, script feedback and story-boarding…"**

So, as an 'outsider' now on the inside too, I have a few tips on how to get the best out of using a director on games.

1. Employ a director who has solid and proven credentials, ideally across the art forms of theatre or TV/film – not just in games.
2. The earlier you can afford the director to be on the project the better. A director can be used for casting, actor suggestions, script feedback, editing and story-boarding for motion capture. The extra time allows him/her to be better informed and prepared for the recording sessions.
3. Get the best out of the team you're paying for by being prepared: send the final script, character images and any animations to the studio in good time so that the whole team can prepare effectively. The more creative information they can get hold of beforehand, the better they can fulfil their jobs for you.
4. Watching a lot of TV and films does not make you a director. Directing is a professional trade that takes years of training (university degree or drama school), experience in the business and, hopefully, talent.
5. Your opinion as the client matters – it's your game and you know it better than anyone. The appropriate person at the recording sessions, with in-depth knowledge of the game's characters and story, will be invaluable.
6. Every actor is unique, and the collaboration between director and actor may be different for each pairing. Be patient as the director and actor get to know each other – those ten to 15 minutes will save a huge amount of time in the session as it will ensure good and fast communication.
7. Trust the director to get the performance you want. There is a huge shared language in the acting profession; let the director translate what you want into this shared language. This is what you're paying the director for. In session, try not to give notes directly to the actors. It's better to have one voice collating all the ideas and deciding how best to deliver them in a constructive way.
8. Never, never, never speak a line for the actor and ask them to do it like that. Your rendition will only offend them and result in an unhappy actor, begrudging performance, sarcasm – or all three. If an actor really isn't getting something, they will ask you to say it in the way you want so they can repeat it.
9. Be aware when the director has the talkback on or off. A client's negative comment can alienate the actor resulting in a worse performance.
10. A director may give a note that doesn't sound as if it's what you asked for – we may use an unexpected route, but we'll get you what you want.

www.side.com

Kate Saxon has been directing theatre for over ten years and directing voice sessions on games projects with Side for over four years. She is associate director of Shared Experience and of the English Touring Theatre.


Wishing all our Clients
and Contractors
a Very Merry Christmas!
GAME OPS
Contents:
1 Programmer
Software installed.
42000 06200
Installation Guide
Certain software comes pre-installed
and is dependant on model chosen
Additional software may be added
for optimum use.
Charging may be required.
Batteries are not included.
For installation problems:
Please see the troubleshooting section
of this manual or contact our helpdesk.
g system per
ot included)
k,
air
mputer
onitor
eyboard
GAME OPS

Contact: Steph Woods
Email: steph.woods@gameops.co.uk
Phone: +44 (0)1382 731909
Fax: +44 (0)1382 731966

GDC®
09
learn
network
inspire

www.GDConf.com

Game Developers Conference®
March 23-27, 2009 | Moscone Center, San Francisco

Early Bird Ends Thursday, February 12, 2009

Register now and save up to 30% on conference passes
Visit GDConf.com for the latest sessions, keynotes, and news

THINK SERVICES

DIRECTORY

The world's premier listing of games development studios, tools, outsourcing specialists, services and courses…

STUDIO:
We profile Broadsword Interactive
p88

TOOLS:
Aristen and Havok get generous
p91

SERVICES:
Side talks Fable II and LBP efforts
p93

KEY CONTACTS

STUDIOS

7 Seas Technologies	www.7seastech.com
Atomic Planet	+44 (0) 1642 871 100
Blitz Games Studios	+44 (0) 1926 880 000
Broadsword Interactive	+44 (0) 1970 626299
Denki	www.denki.co.uk
Fuse Games	careers@fusegames.com
Oxygen	+44 (0) 1933 446437
Realtime Worlds	+44 (0) 1382 202 821
Rebellion	+44 (0) 1865 792 201
Stainless Games	jobs@stainlessgames.com
Strawdog Studio	+44 (0) 1332 258 862

TOOLS

bluegfx	+44 (0) 1483 467 200
Epic Games	+1 919 870 1516
Fork Particle	00 (1) 925 417 1785
Natural Motion	+44 (0)1865 250575

SERVICES

3D Creation Studio	+44 (0) 151 236 9992
Absolute Quality	+44 (0)141 220 5600
Air Studios	+44 (0) 207 794 0660
GAMEINDUSTRYJOBS.eu	+31 3110 7504580
High Score	+44 (0) 1295 738 337
Partnertrans	+49 (0) 2104 172 660
Philips amBX	www.ambx.com
Testronic Labs	+44 (0)1753 653 722
Tsunami Sounds	+44 (0) 207 350 2828
Universally Speaking	+44 (0) 1480 210 621

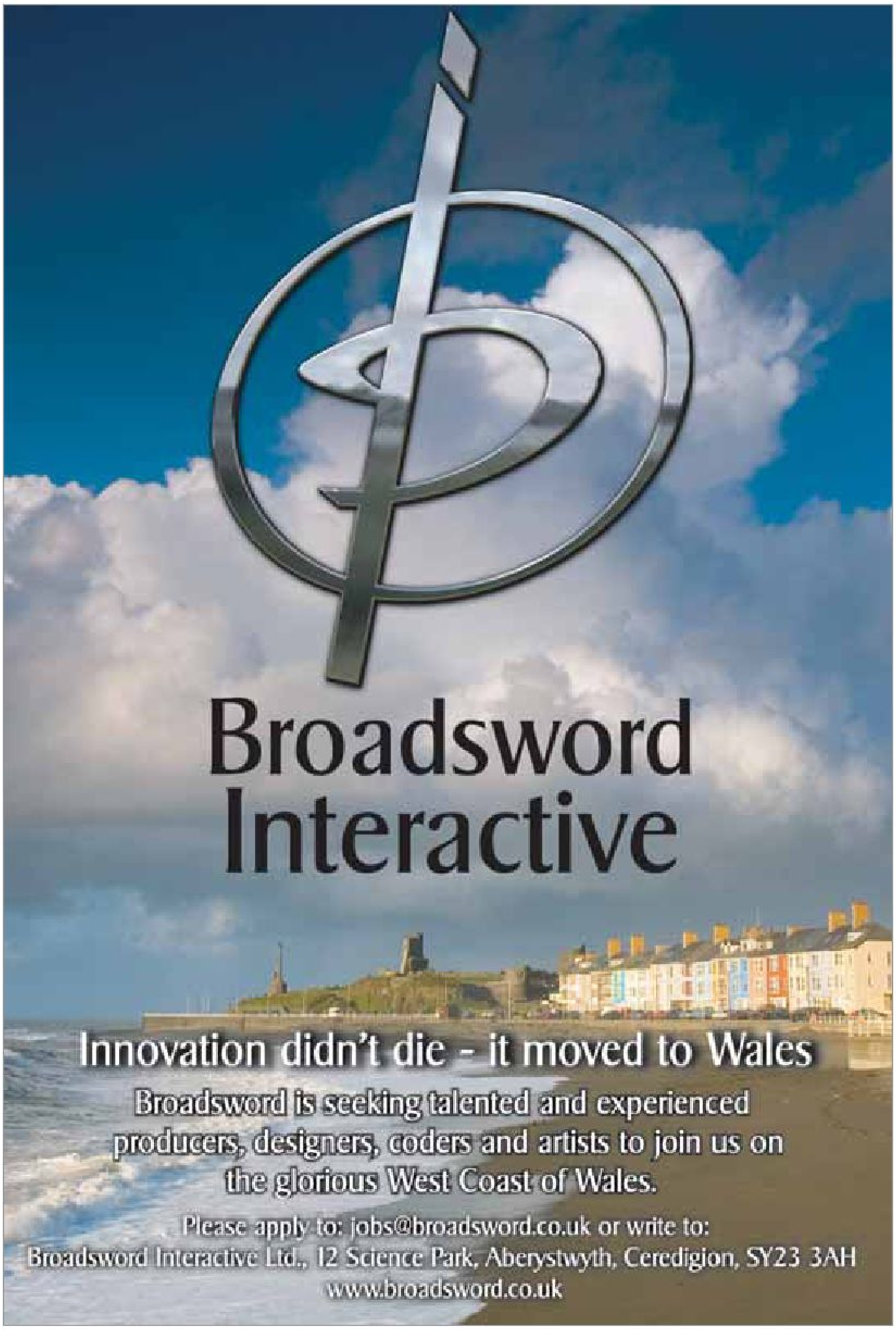
COURSES

Goldsmiths	+44 (0)20 70785052
University of Hull	+44 (0) 1482 465 951

RATES

1/4 page: £450 (or £200/month if booked for a minimum of six months)

To get your company featured here contact:
jaspreet.kandola@intentmedia.co.uk T: 01992 535 647



Broadsword Interactive

Innovation didn't die – it moved to Wales

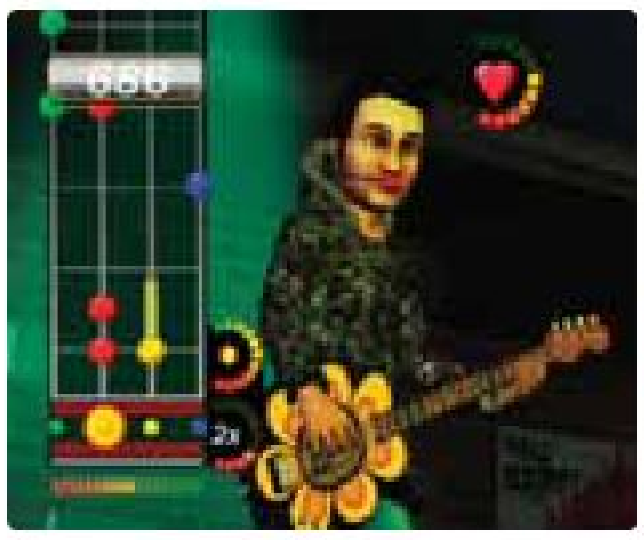
Broadsword is seeking talented and experienced producers, designers, coders and artists to join us on the glorious West Coast of Wales.

Please apply to: jobs@broadsword.co.uk or write to:
Broadsword Interactive Ltd., 12 Science Park, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3AH
www.broadsword.co.uk

Studio Profile

This month: BROADSWORD INTERACTIVE

FACTFILE
Location: Aberystwyth, Wales
Founded: 1995
Web address: www.broadsword.co.uk
E-mail address: enquiries@broadsword.co.uk
Key personnel: David Rowe (chief executive officer), John Jones-Steele (managing director), Nick Court (studio manager), Jim Finnis (technical director), Tiziano Cirillo (creative director)
Current projects: An original real-time strategy game, AmbX software, working on games for iPhone, PS2, PS3, Xbox 360, Wii, DS and PSP
Previous projects: *PopStar Guitar* (PS2), *All Music Dance*, *Dance Factory*, *Dance: UK LX Party*, *Paris-Dakar Rally* (PS2), *Wipeout* (PC), *Worms Armageddon* (Mac)



AFTER BEING founded in 1995 by industry veterans John Jones-Steele and David Rowe, and working on game conversions and advertising screen saver creation, Broadsword Interactive quickly moved on to developing original games.

Both Jones-Steele and Rowe joined the industry in 1981, and bring a wealth of experience in packaging design, art direction, and game production from the golden era of the C64 and ZX81 onward. Jones-Steele was also involved in Broadsword Television's cult children's TV show *Knightmare*.

After ten years in business, in 2005 the Broadsword Interactive studio was awarded a BAFTA Cymru for *Dance: UK XL Party*, granting recognition for its move to designing, developing and producing original products. Broadsword also made the *Develop 100* in the same year for its popular *Dance* franchise, and has gone on to establish a reputation for its range of rhythm action genre releases.

Based on the west coast of Wales and surrounded by areas of rural beauty, the developer continues to convert high profile games to various formats, and is licensed to create titles for all the major handheld and console formats, including the iPhone.

Currently, the studio is working on an unnamed original real-time strategy title, and has just completed the PS2 version of *PopStar Guitar* for XS Games. Continuing the tradition of contributing to the rhythm action genre, and demonstrating its ability to expand the traditional video game format, Broadsword Interactive was also intrinsically involved in the design and creation of the AirG controller add-on for the Wii.

The company's studio mission is "to create great games in an environment that allows for innovation, creativity and fulfilment", and in pursuit of that goal an impending move to the new offices lead to something of a restructure, including appointing Nick Court as studio manager. Court brings his experience from working on renowned titles like Cannon Fodder and Bob's Bad Day.

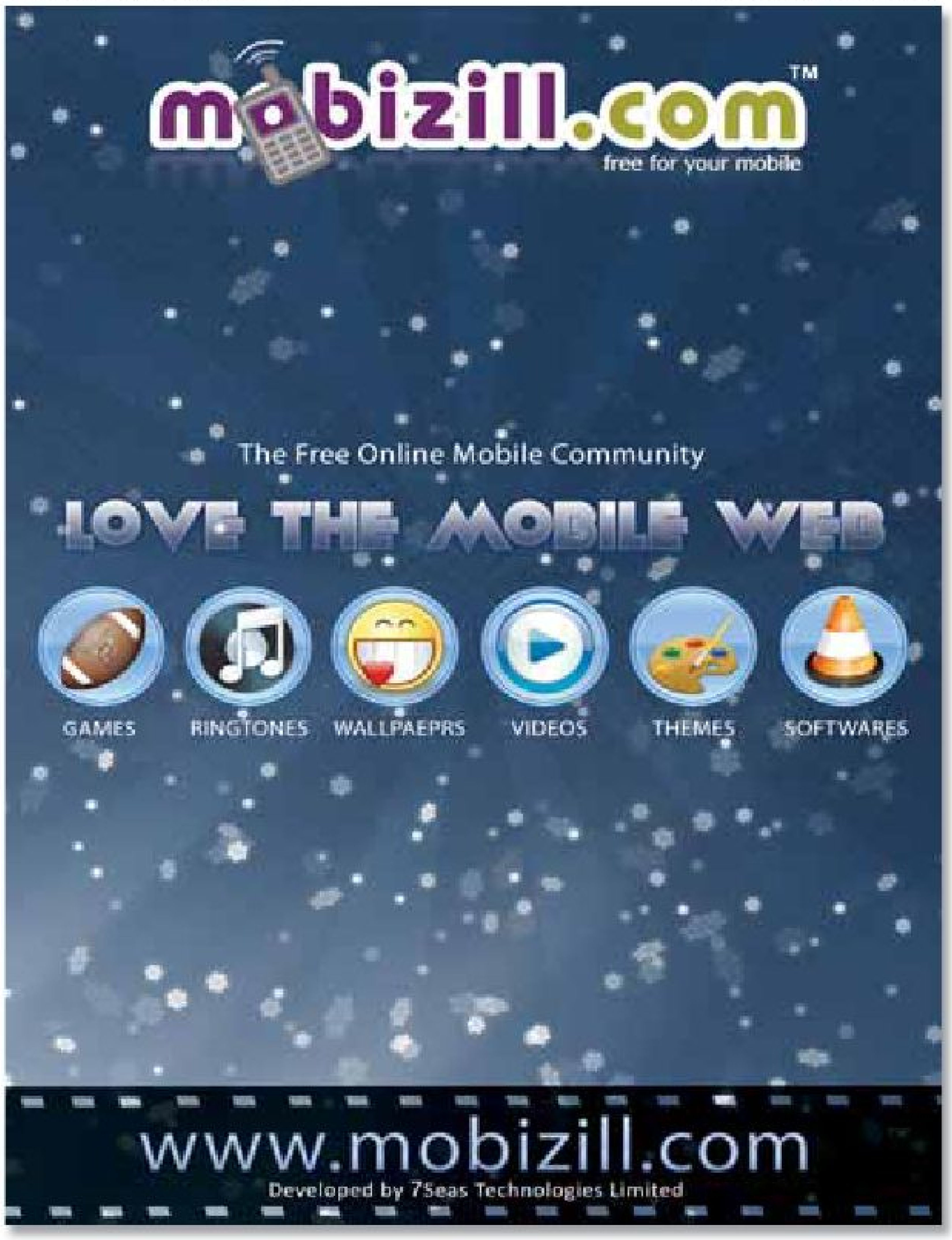
CONTACT
Broadsword Interactive Limited
12 Science Park, Aberystwyth,
Ceredigion. Wales. SY23 3AH
Tel: 01970 626299
Fax: 01970 626291

brought to you by...

DayOne Search
One day, *you'll* make the perfect career move...
Start your Search at www.dayonesearch.com

www.dayonesearch.com 01273 666 380

7Seas Technologies Ltd www.7seastech.com



mobizill.com™
free for your mobile
The Free Online Mobile Community
LOVE THE MOBILE WEB
GAMES RINGTONES WALLPAEPRS VIDEOS THEMES SOFTWARES
www.mobizill.com
Developed by 7Seas Technologies Limited

Atomic Planet 01642 871100 www.atomic-planet.com

ATOMIC PLANET

The TRANSFER WINDOW is now open...

We are expanding our squad. We want your talent on our team, and you won't be left on the bench! If you are currently playing on a muddy field, come to where the grass is greener... apply now!

Position: *Producers*
Experienced individuals with a proven track record of bringing quality games to market, on time and on budget

Position: *Programmers*
Tools and technology programmers for next generation, Gameplay programmers, A.I. programmers.

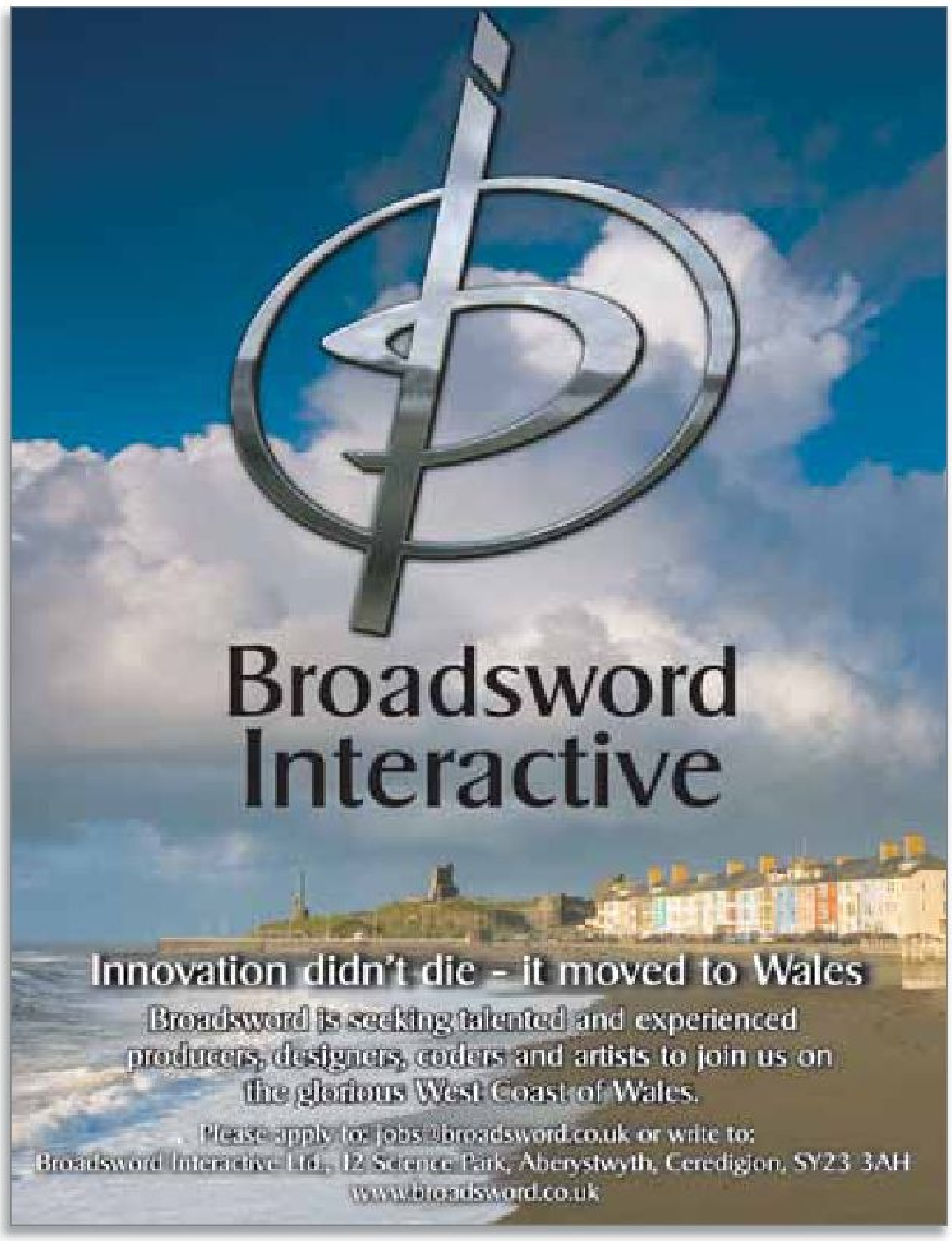
Position: *Technical Manager*
Must have excellent technical, leadership and management skills

All applications will be treated with the utmost confidentiality
Send your CV and demos to jobs@atomic-planet.com, or post to :
HR Department, Atomic Planet Entertainment Ltd.
72-80 Corporation Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland. TS1 2RF
All trademarks and images are copyright of their respective owners

Blitz Games Studios 01926 880000 www.BlitzGames.com

Wanna be a big Shot?
www.VolatileGames.com
VOLATILE

Broadsword Interactive 01970 626299 www.broadsword.co.uk



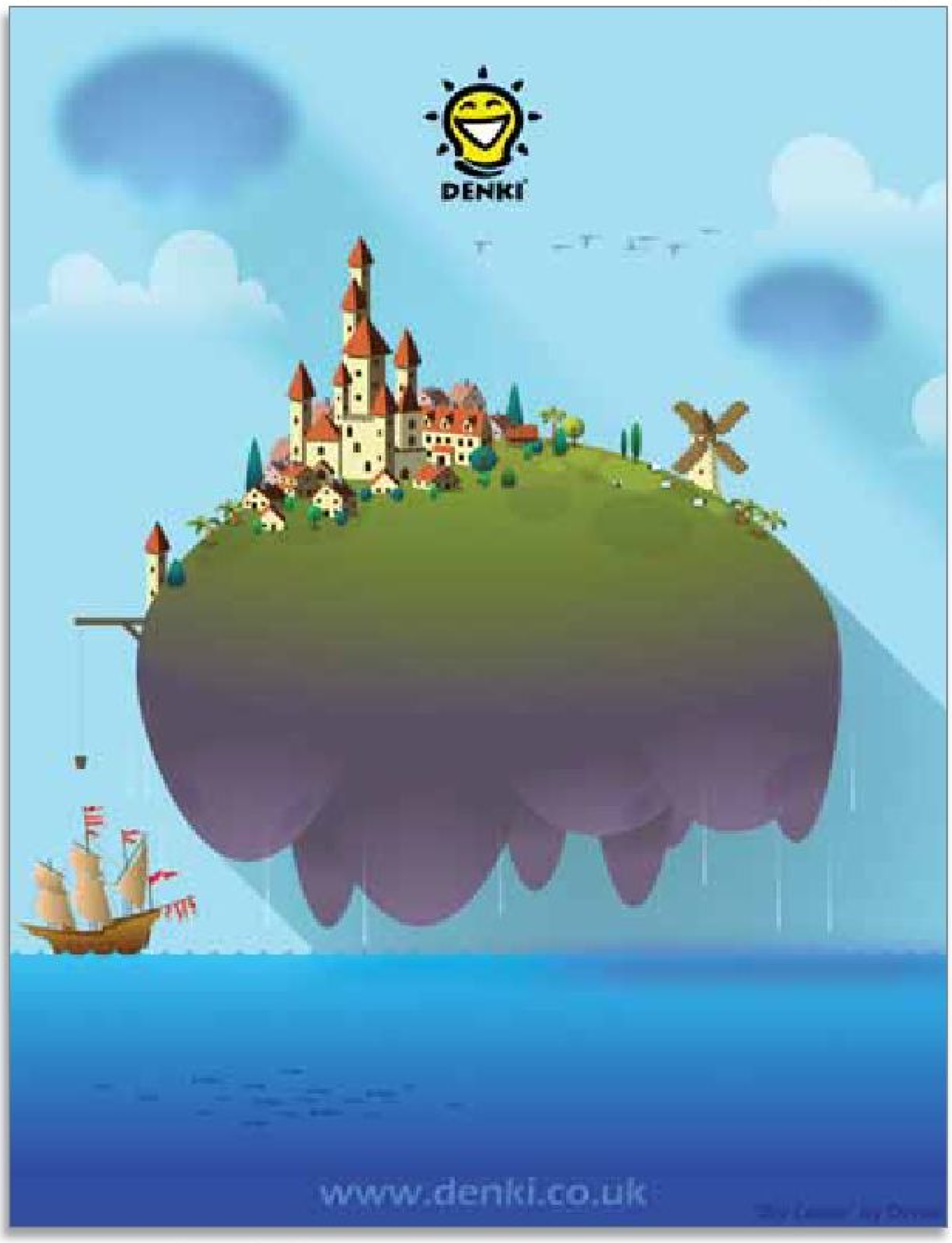
Broadsword Interactive

Innovation didn't die - it moved to Wales

Broadsword is seeking talented and experienced producers, designers, coders and artists to join us on the glorious West Coast of Wales.

Please apply to: jobs@broadsword.co.uk or write to:
Broadsword Interactive Ltd., 12 Science Park, Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, SY23 3AH
www.broadsword.co.uk

Denki www.denki.co.uk



Fuse Games careers@fusegames.com www.fusegames.com

Senior Artists
Graduate Programmers
Graduate Artists

Royalties - No Overtime
Design Input - Free Lunches
BUPA - Pension Plan
Japanese Lessons

www.fusegames.com

STUDIOS

Oxygen 01993 446 437 www.oxygen-studios.com

Oxygen Studios are looking for talented and motivated staff to join their team in South London working on projects across a variety of genre and formats.

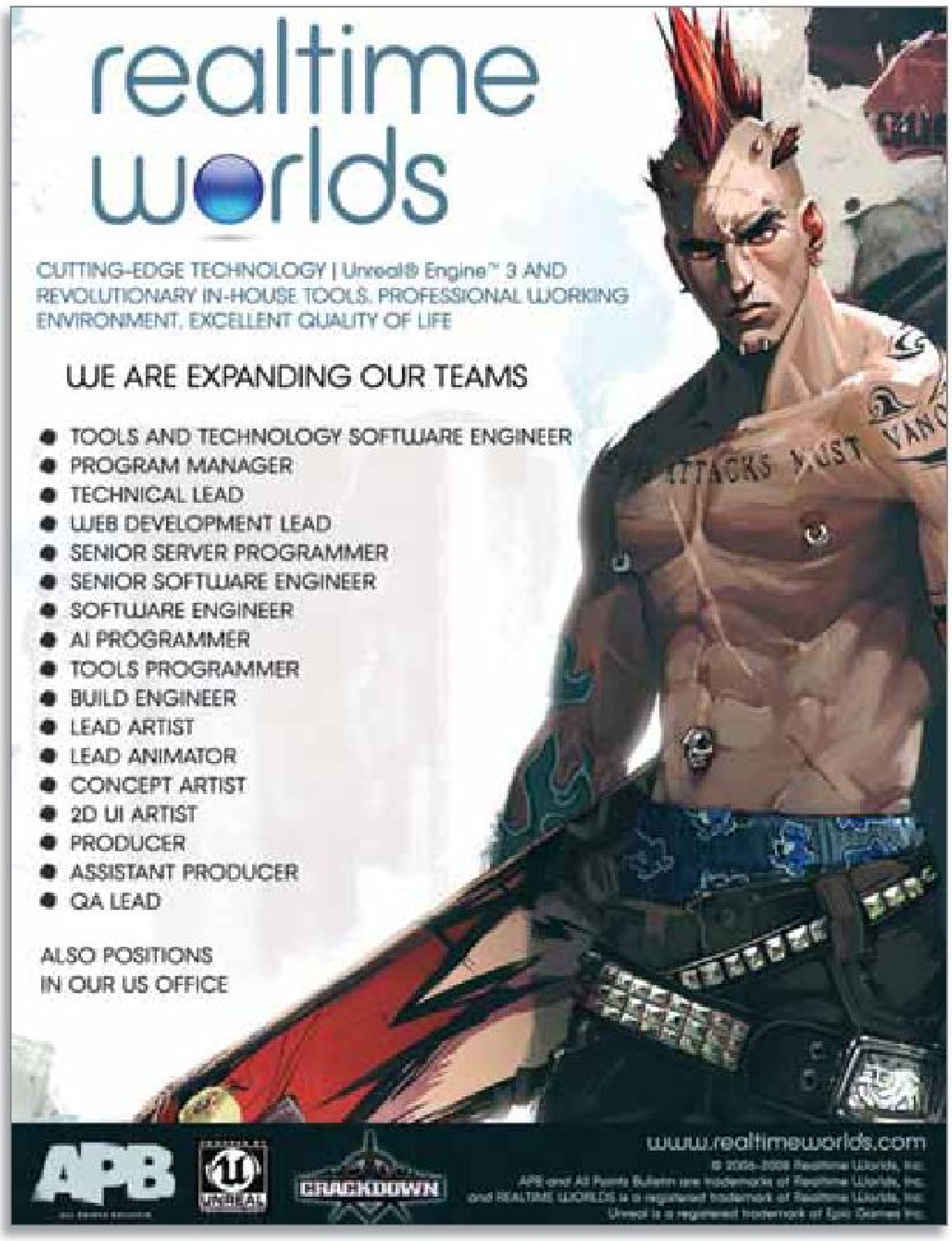
We are currently seeking:
Experienced Network Coder

develop
INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Develop Industry Excellence Awards 2008 nominee

Send your details, CV, and links to showreels to:
coderjobs@oxygen-studios.com
artistjobs@oxygen-studios.com

Real Time Worlds 01382 202821 www.realtimeworlds.com



CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY | Unreal® Engine™ 3 AND REVOLUTIONARY IN-HOUSE TOOLS. PROFESSIONAL WORKING ENVIRONMENT. EXCELLENT QUALITY OF LIFE

WE ARE EXPANDING OUR TEAMS

- TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGY SOFTWARE ENGINEER
- PROGRAM MANAGER
- TECHNICAL LEAD
- WEB DEVELOPMENT LEAD
- SENIOR SERVER PROGRAMMER
- SENIOR SOFTWARE ENGINEER
- SOFTWARE ENGINEER
- AI PROGRAMMER
- TOOLS PROGRAMMER
- BUILD ENGINEER
- LEAD ARTIST
- LEAD ANIMATOR
- CONCEPT ARTIST
- 2D UI ARTIST
- PRODUCER
- ASSISTANT PRODUCER
- QA LEAD

ALSO POSITIONS
IN OUR US OFFICE

www.realtimeworlds.com

© 2005-2008 Realtime Worlds, Inc.
APB and All Points Bulletin are trademarks of Realtime Worlds, Inc.
and REALTIME WORLDS is a registered trademark of Realtime Worlds, Inc.
Unreal is a registered trademark of Epic Games Inc.

Rebellion 01865 792 201 www.rebellion.co.uk

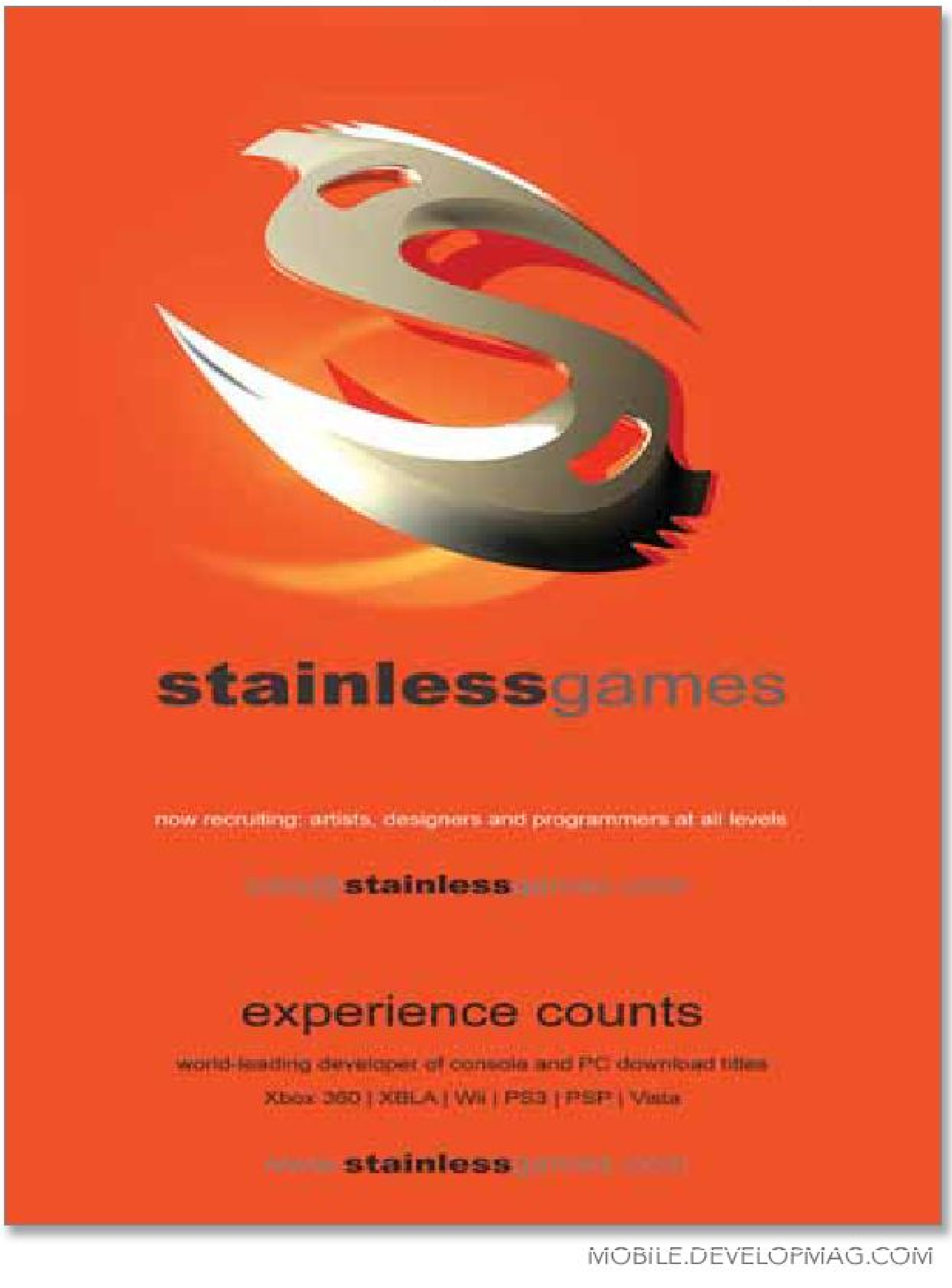
JOIN THE REBELLION

We need **Programmers, Designers, Artists and Producers** for projects at our Oxford, Derby and Liverpool studios.

Contact us: Vacancies_devmag@rebellion.co.uk
- Please provide a CV only.
For portfolios/showreels, please provide a link for download.

REBELLION®

Stainless Games jobs@stainlessgames.com www.stainlessgames.com



stainlessgames

now recruiting: artists, designers and programmers at all levels

jobs@**stainless**games.com

experience counts

world-leading developer of console and PC download titles
Xbox 360 | XBLA | Wii | PS3 | PSP | Vista

www.**stainless**games.com

Strawdog Studios 01332 258862 www.strawdogstudios.co.uk

strawdog studios
GAMES IN THE MAKING

NOW RECRUITING

We are currently looking for programmers, artists and designers to work on several exciting new original games, so come and join the team!

PLEASE SEND YOUR CV TO:

jobs@strawdogstudios.com

www.strawdogstudios.com
www.geongame.com
info@strawdogstudios.com

Strawdog Studios Ltd
The ID Centre Lathkill House
The RTC Business Park
London Road Derby DE24 8UP
United Kingdom

Tools News

FxStudio for free

Launching a new special deal for Gamebryo licensees, Aristen is offering its effects solution FxStudio for free to all those using Emergent's game platform.

The deal stipulates that any people signing up as licensees before the end of the year can get a free FxStudio licence, providing that a one-year service contract is also taken.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for game teams to get a leg up on visual effects development. The FxStudio-Gamebryo integration is a complete content pipeline ready for prototyping or full production environments," said Toby Gladwell, chief technical officer at Aristen.

Katie Morgan, Emergent's VP of sales and marketing, added: "Emergent's Partner Program enables Gamebryo developers to work with the industry's best tools right out-of-the-box, saving our developers time and money."

www.aristen.com

Generous Behaviour from Havok

Havok's Behaviour Tool for is now available for the public to download from its website.

The Behaviour Tool is a bespoke application that allows users to build and simulate game-ready characters in a 3D level, placing the creation process in the hands of artists and designers. The authored content can then be used in games that use Havok's Physics, Animation or Behaviour middleware.

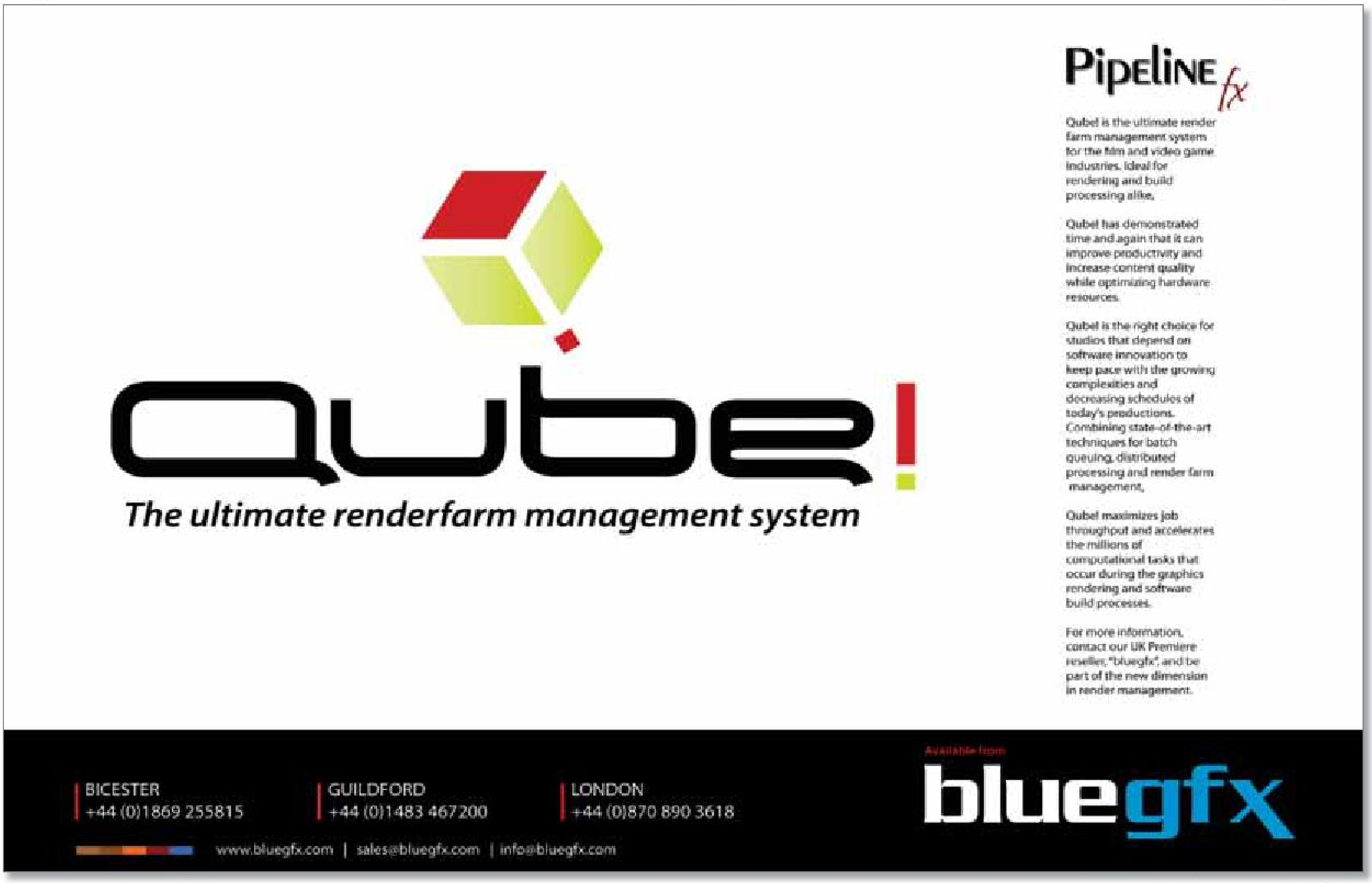
It joins the Havok Content Tools, also available from Havok's website, in helping prepare content from applications such as 3ds Max, Maya and XSI.

"This kind of creative access was previously limited to programming and proprietary in-house tool sets," said Jeff Yates, VP product management at Havok.

"With the Havok Behavior Tool, we wanted to enable an entirely new generation of interactive content creators who can bridge the gap between static 3D assets and game code."

www.havok.com

bluegfx 01483 467200 www.bluegfx.com



Qube!

The ultimate renderfarm management system

PipeLine fx

Qube! is the ultimate render farm management system for the film and video game industries. Ideal for rendering and build processing alike.

Qube! has demonstrated time and again that it can improve productivity and increase content quality while optimizing hardware resources.

Qube! is the right choice for studios that depend on software innovation to keep pace with the growing complexities and decreasing schedules of today's productions. Combining state-of-the-art techniques for batch queuing, distributed processing and render farm management.

Qube! maximizes job throughput and accelerates the millions of computational tasks that occur during the graphics rendering and software build processes.

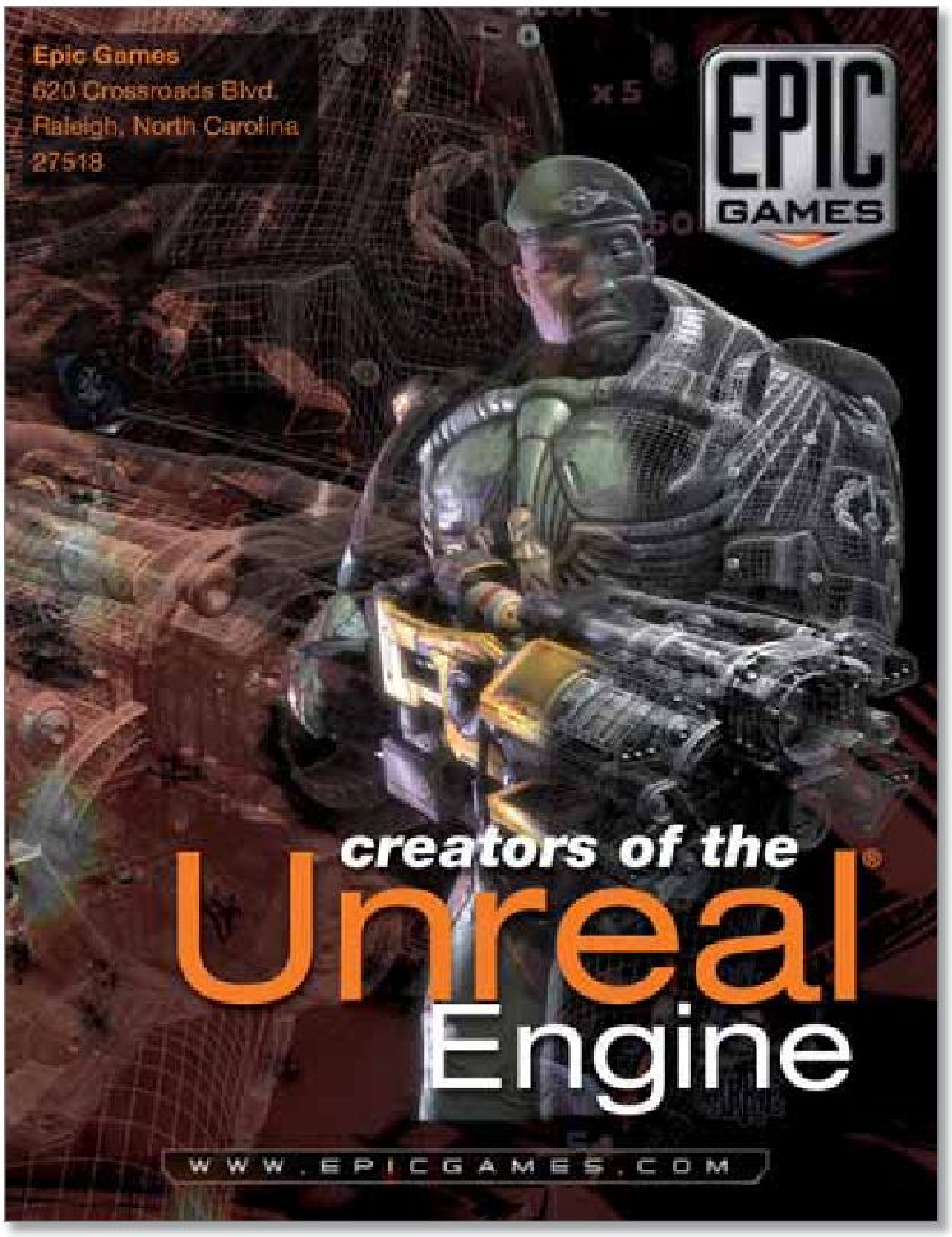
For more information, contact our UK Premiere reseller, "bluegfx", and be part of the new dimension in render management.

BICESTER +44 (0)1869 255815
GUILDFORD +44 (0)1483 467200
LONDON +44 (0)870 890 3618

Available from bluegfx

www.bluegfx.com | sales@bluegfx.com | info@bluegfx.com

Epic +1-919-870-1516 www.epicgames.com


Epic Games
620 Crossroads Blvd.
Raleigh, North Carolina
27518
EPIC GAMES
creators of the
Unreal®
Engine
WWW.EPICGAMES.COM

Tool Spotlight

ABYSSAL ENGINE

The new Abyssal Engine is a game creation tool with the depth its title suggests. The entire suite is designed to both reduce development time and empower game makers, offering the flexibility to create all kinds of titles from RPGs to RTS titles.

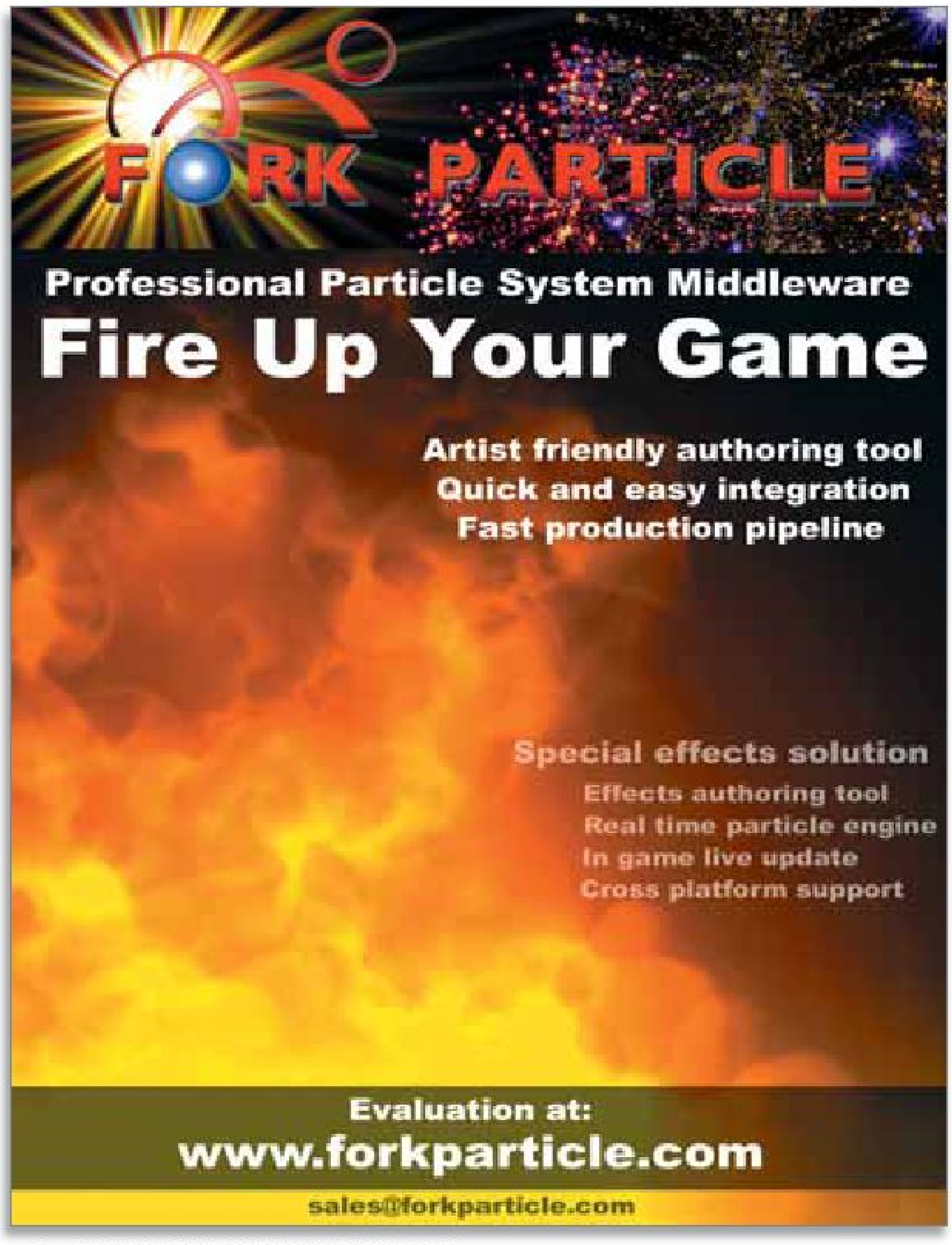
Allowing developers to create and test game-necessary assets with a commanding toolbox of solutions, Abyssal's runtime system optimisation caters for the rendering of huge real-time worlds, numerous playable and artificially intelligent characters, and large dataset loading.

The comprehensive feature-set includes a toolchain specifically designed to cover all artwork creation aspects, including third party-friendly export and import from authoring tools, visual effects creation and landscape editing. Abyssal's 3ds Max Exporter means the engine is compatible with 3D Studio Max, and comprehensive geometry, animation and world editors provide for ambitious projects.

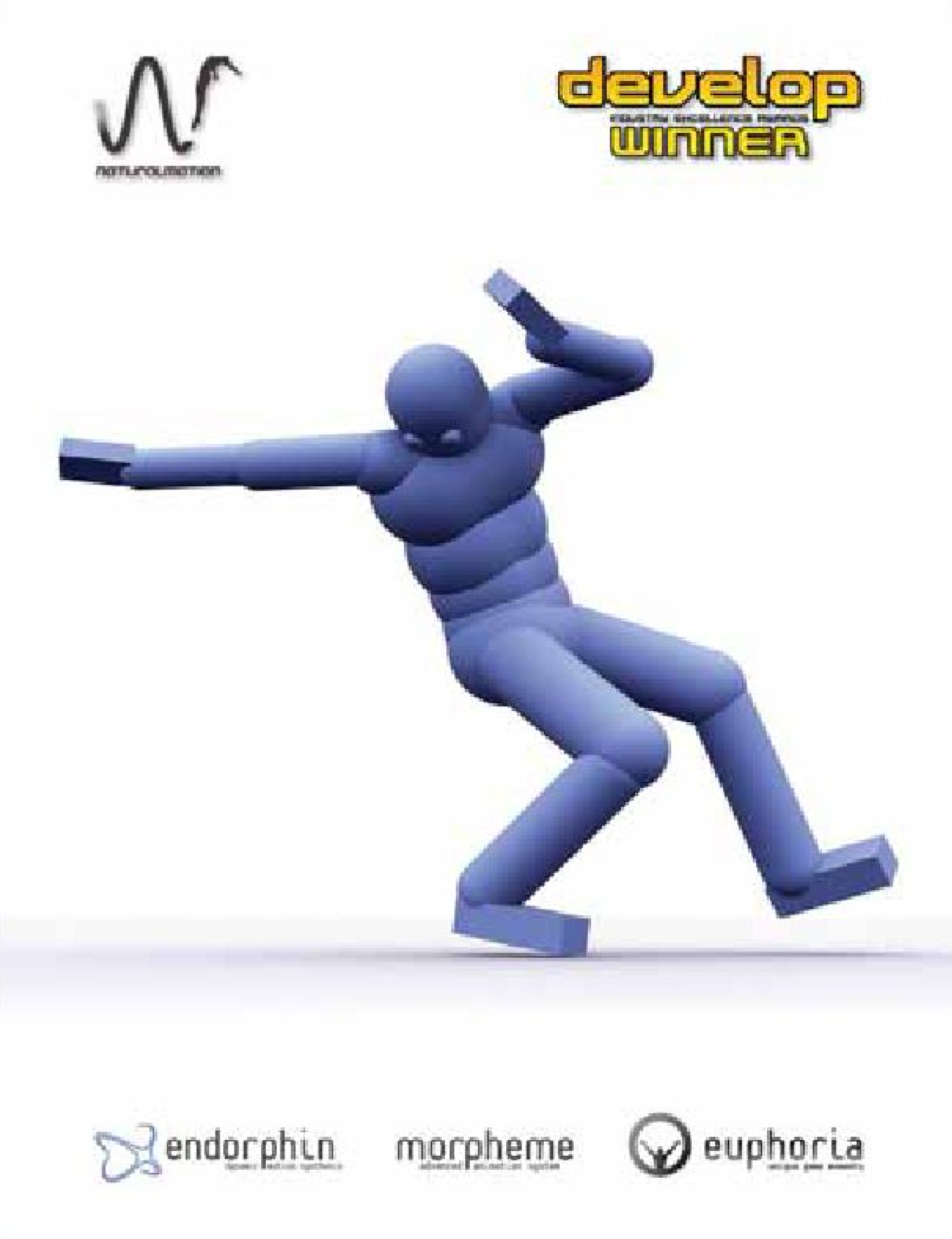
Commercial and indie licenses and a free evaluation kit are now available, meaning Abyssal has every chance of establishing itself as a successful RPG engine over the coming months.

CONTACT:
www.abyssalengine.com

Fork Particle 00 (1) 925 417 1785 info@forkparticle.com


FORK PARTICLE
Professional Particle System Middleware
Fire Up Your Game
Artist friendly authoring tool
Quick and easy integration
Fast production pipeline
Special effects solution
Effects authoring tool
Real time particle engine
In game live update
Cross platform support
Evaluation at:
www.forkparticle.com
sales@forkparticle.com

Natural Motion www.naturalmotion.com


NATURALMOTION
develop
WINNER
endorphin
morpheme
euphoria

Services News

Side's big Christmas

Side UK is toasting the end of a hugely successful year, having worked on key releases like Lionhead's *Fable II*.

The project was a massive task for Side, which used over 45 actors to play nearly 200 speaking roles. Four voice directors were used to ensure consistency, while the actual recording process ran concurrently in two of Side's studios for over three months. In total, over 370,000 words of dialogue were recorded - amounting to 38 hours of material.

"*Fable II* was a real pleasure to work on," said Andy Emery, creative director of Side. "We realised this was going to be something special as soon as we saw the superb script. The widespread critical acclaim for the performances in *Fable II* show the impact a great script, cast and direction can make"

Peter Molyneux added: "The sheer amount of dialogue in *Fable II* meant this was a massive project. Side rose to this challenge in a professional and efficient way. They have done a great job for us."

The company's writers agency Sidelines is also celebrating its work on *LittleBigPlanet*.

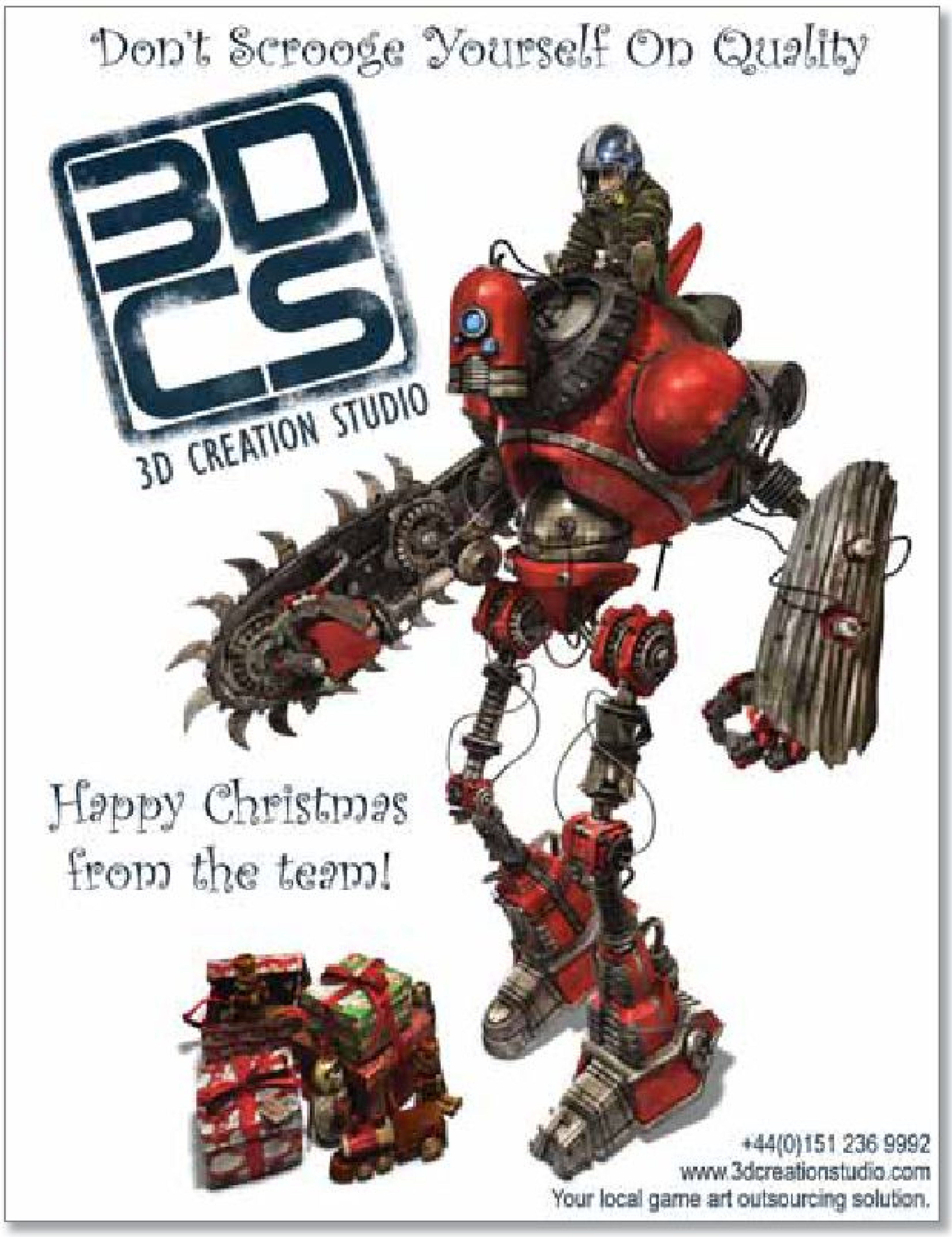
It commissioned writer Dean Wilkinson to 'inject a mix of humour and personality' into the intro and tutorial text voiced by Steven Fry, 'for that special Fry style'. He also contributed to the in-game text, renamed characters and 'extended their personalities and interactions'.

"Dean joined Sidelines with extensive television comedy writing experience under his belt," said Sini Downing, director of Sidelines.

"While he was new to the interactive industry, when he wrote for LittleBigPlanet he immediately understood the vibe the guys were looking for in the writing. He managed to get that careful balance of information and fun."

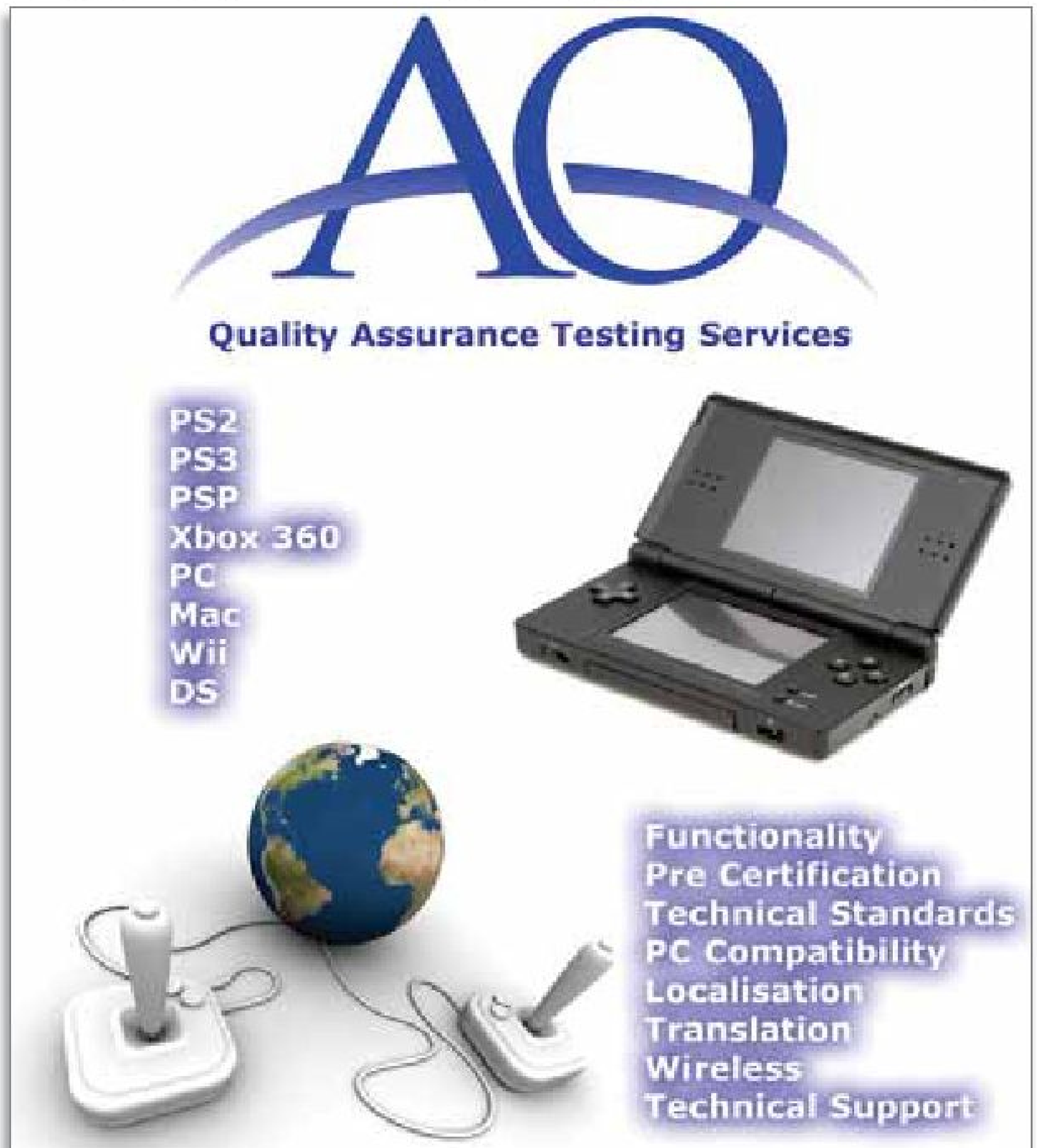
www.sideuk.com

3D Creation Studio +44(0)151 236 9992 www.3dcreationstudio.com



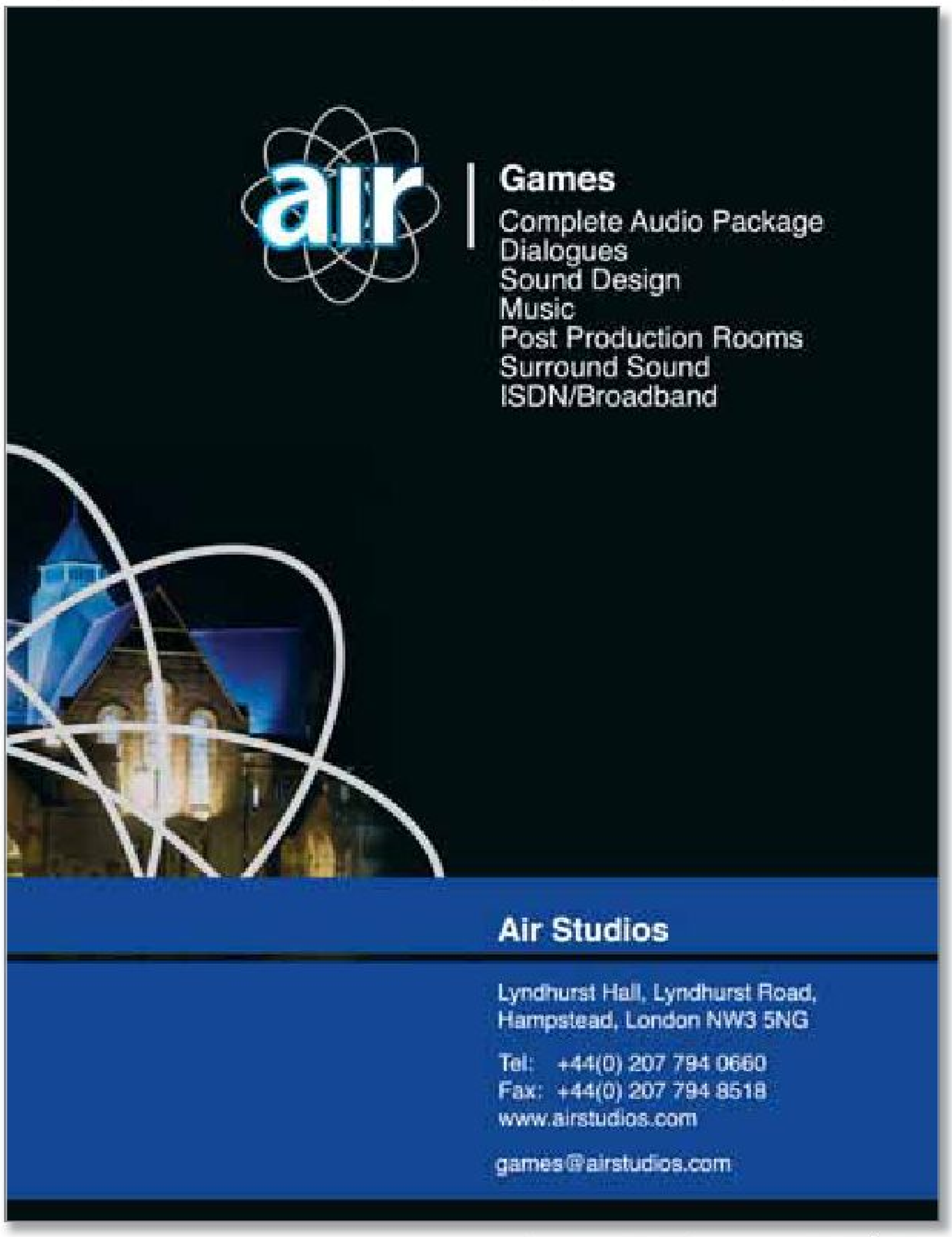
Don't Scrooge Yourself On Quality
3DCS
3D CREATION STUDIO
Happy Christmas from the team!
+44(0)151 236 9992
www.3dcreationstudio.com
Your local game art outsourcing solution.

Absolute Quality +44(0)141 220 5600 www.e4e.com



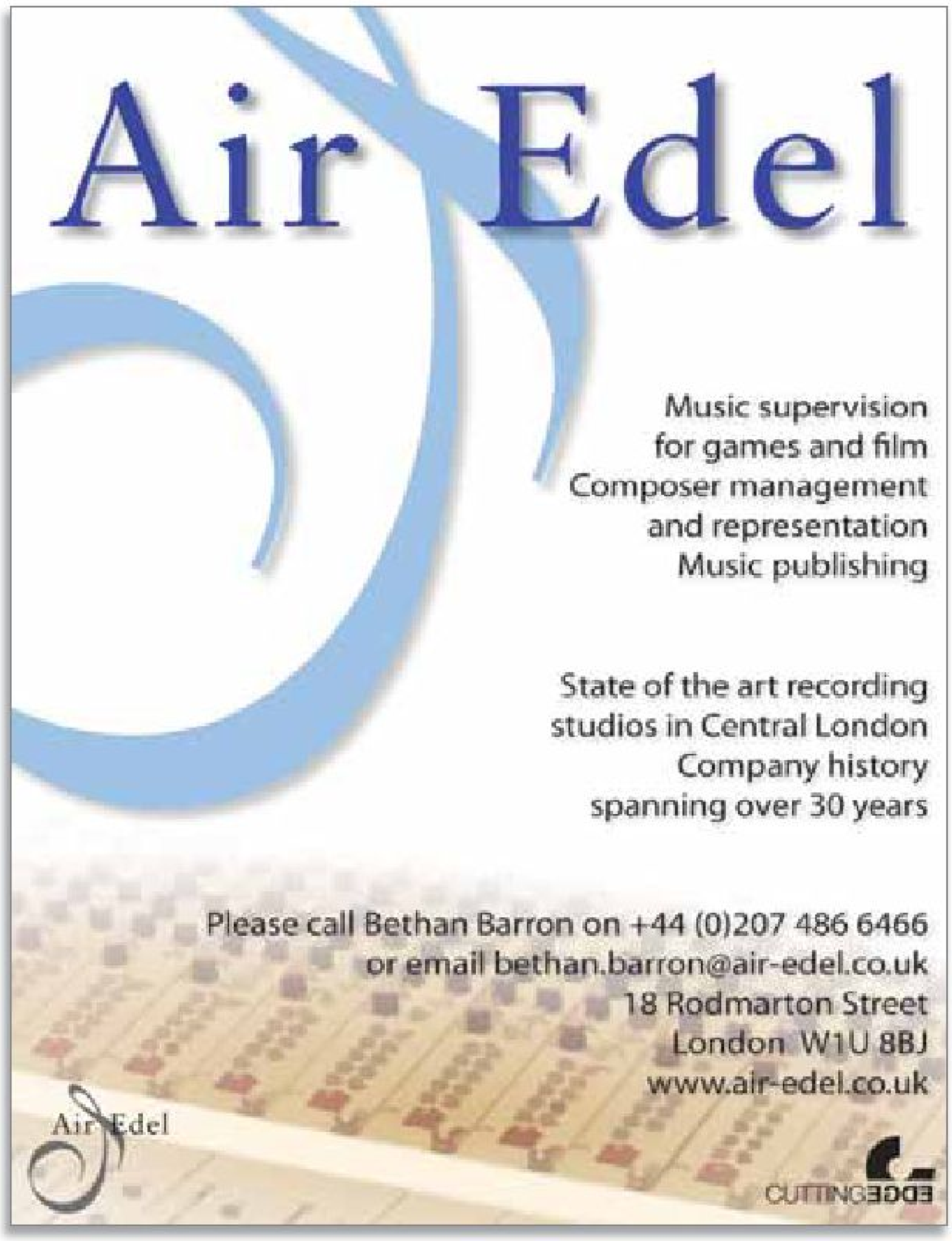
AQ
Quality Assurance Testing Services
PS2
PS3
PSP
Xbox 360
PC
Mac
Wii
DS
Functionality
Pre Certification
Technical Standards
PC Compatibility
Localisation
Translation
Wireless
Technical Support
Contact us on +44 (0)141 220 5607 or
europeansales@absolutequality.co.uk
www.absolutequality.co.uk

Air Studios 0207 7940660 www.airstudios.com



air | Games
Complete Audio Package
Dialogues
Sound Design
Music
Post Production Rooms
Surround Sound
ISDN/Broadband
Air Studios
Lyndhurst Hall, Lyndhurst Road,
Hampstead, London NW3 5NG
Tel: +44(0) 207 794 0660
Fax: +44(0) 207 794 8518
www.airstudios.com
games@airstudios.com

Air Edel +4 (0) 207 486 6466 www.air-edel.co.uk



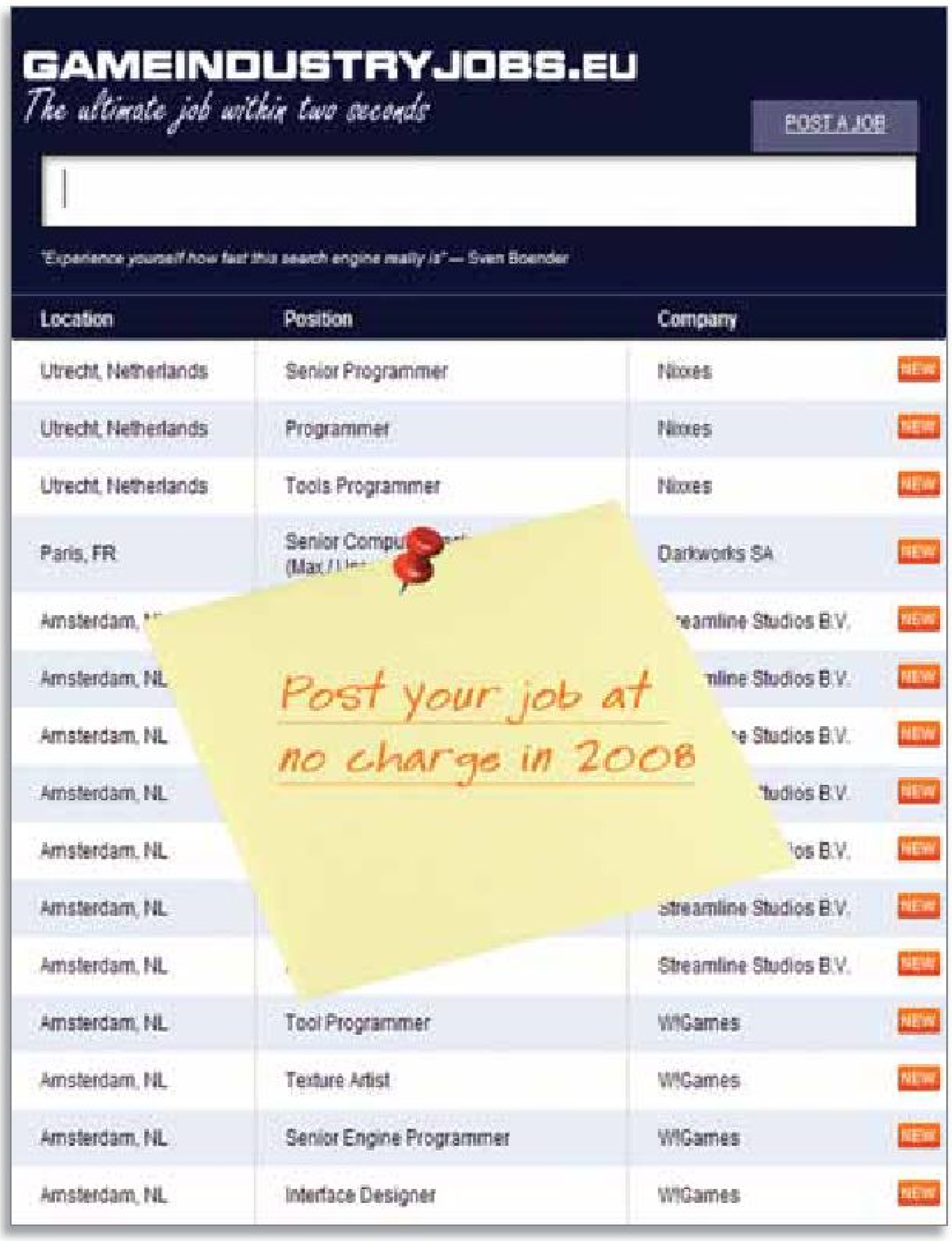
Air Edel

Music supervision
for games and film
Composer management
and representation
Music publishing

State of the art recording
studios in Central London
Company history
spanning over 30 years

Please call Bethan Barron on +44 (0)207 486 6466
or email bethan.barron@air-edel.co.uk
18 Rodmarton Street
London W1U 8BJ
www.air-edel.co.uk

GAMEINDUSTRYJOBS.eu +31 3110 7504580 www.GAMEINDUSTRYJOBS.eu



GAMEINDUSTRYJOBS.EU

The ultimate job within two seconds

"Experience yourself how fast this search engine really is" — Sven Boender

Location	Position	Company	
Utrecht, Netherlands	Senior Programmer	Nixxes	NEW
Utrecht, Netherlands	Programmer	Nixxes	NEW
Utrecht, Netherlands	Tools Programmer	Nixxes	NEW
Paris, FR	Senior Compu (Max / U	Darkworks SA	NEW
Amsterdam,		eamline Studios B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL		mline Studios B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL		e Studios B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL		tudios B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL		os B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL		Streamline Studios B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL		Streamline Studios B.V.	NEW
Amsterdam, NL	Tool Programmer	W!Games	NEW
Amsterdam, NL	Texture Artist	W!Games	NEW
Amsterdam, NL	Senior Engine Programmer	W!Games	NEW
Amsterdam, NL	Interface Designer	W!Games	NEW

Partnertrans +49 (0) 2104 172 660 www.partnertrans.com

localisation solutions for the entertainment industry.

- Localisation
- Voice Production
- Quality Assurance
- Creative Services

The partner for all your translation needs.

partnertrans.

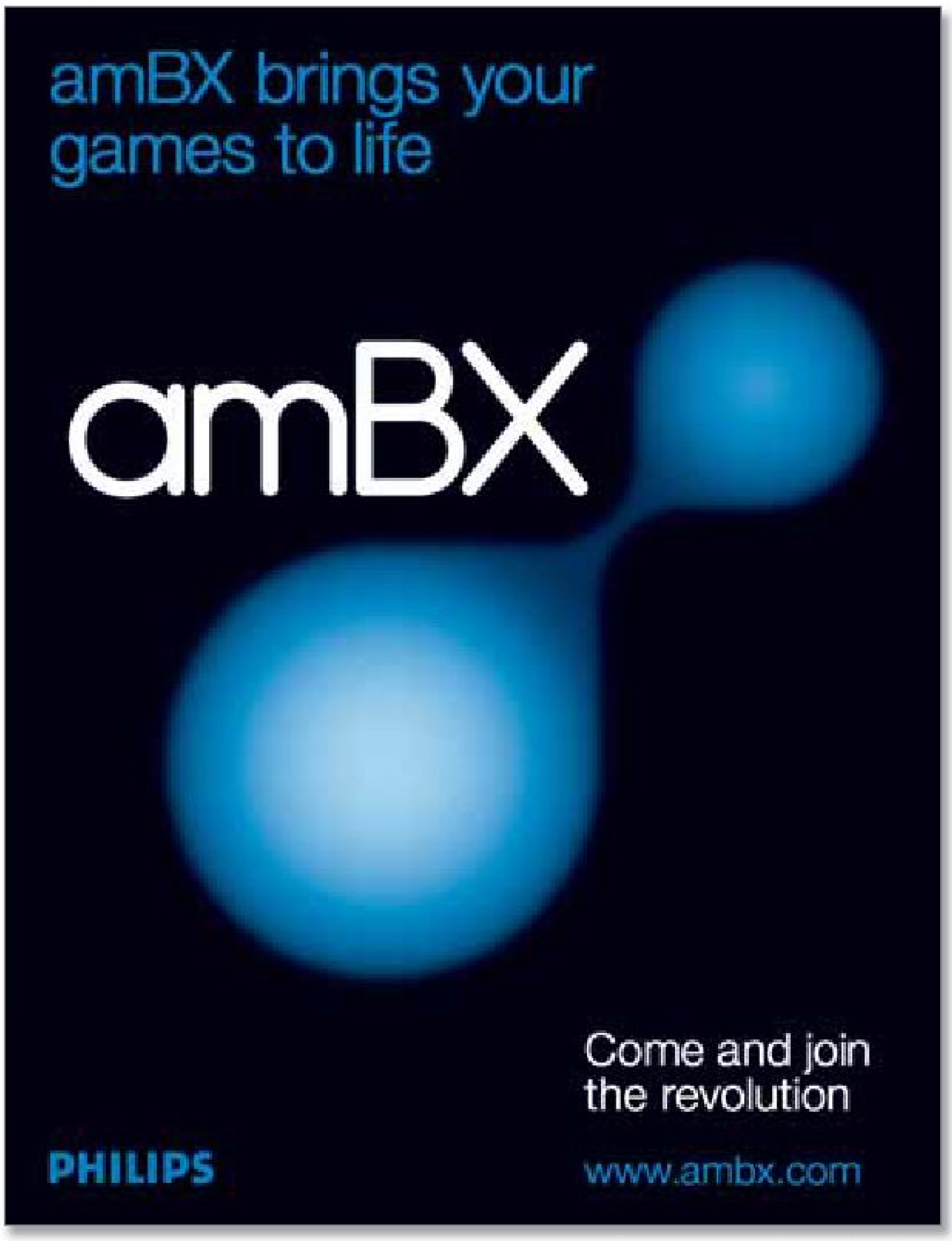
Partnertrans®
Tel. +49 (0)2104 172660
Fax: +49 (0)2104 172688
Email: info@partnertrans.com

Partnertrans® Ltd.
Tel. +44 (0)1753 247 731
Fax: +44 (0)1753 245 531
Email: info_uk@partnertrans.com

We specialise in the complete range of localisation solutions.
Visit www.partnertrans.com for our full range of services.

www.partnertrans.com

PHILIPS amBX www.ambx.com



amBX brings your games to life

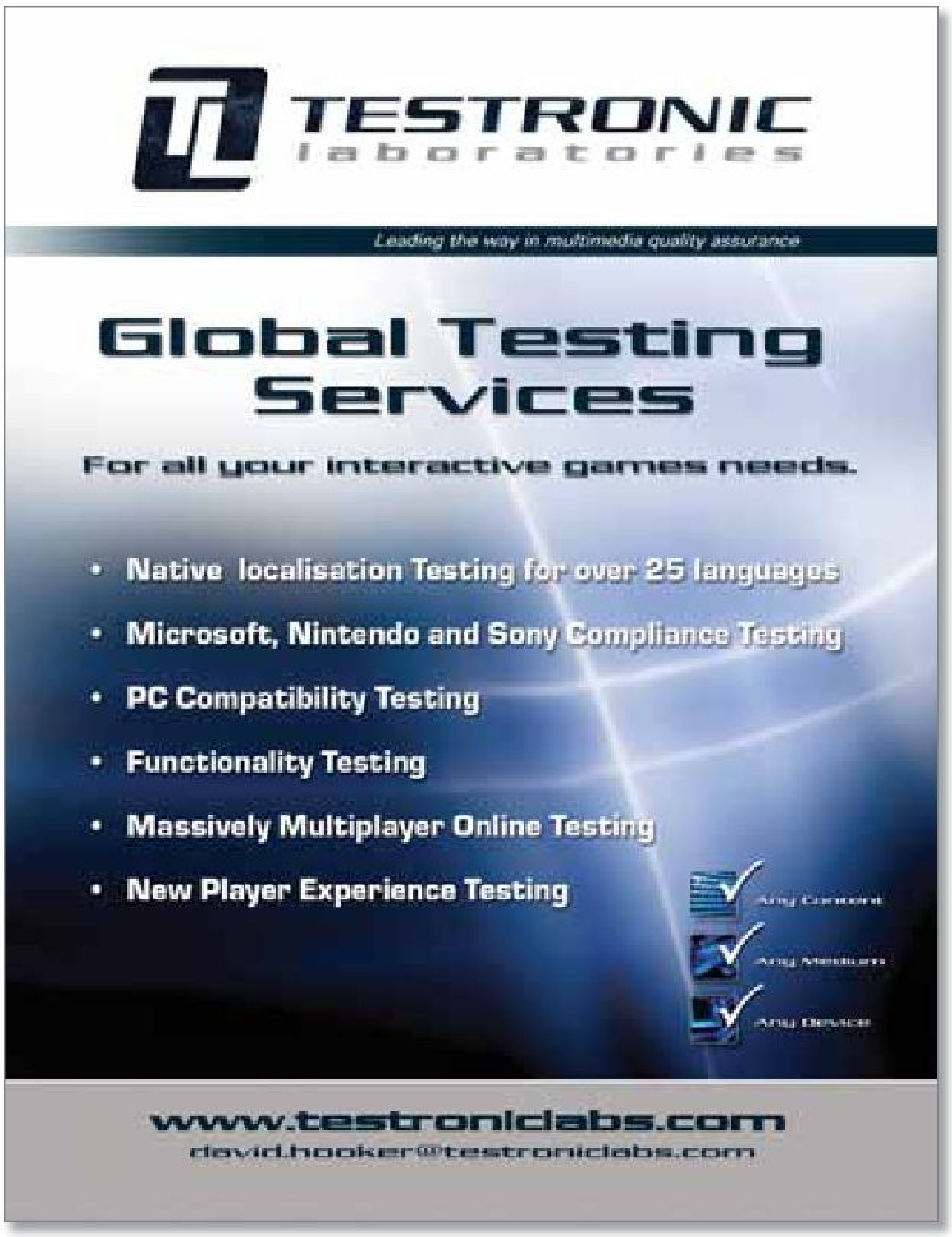
amBX

Come and join
the revolution

PHILIPS

www.ambx.com

Testronic Labs +44 (0) 1753 653 722 www.testroniclabs.com



TESTRONIC laboratories

Leading the way in multimedia quality assurance

Global Testing Services

For all your interactive games needs.

- Native localisation Testing for over 25 languages
- Microsoft, Nintendo and Sony Compliance Testing
- PC Compatibility Testing
- Functionality Testing
- Massively Multiplayer Online Testing
- New Player Experience Testing

www.testroniclabs.com
david.hooker@testroniclabs.com

High Score +4 (0) 1295 738 337 www.high-score.co.uk

GAME AUDIO

WORLD-CLASS AUDIO OUTSOURCING

MUSIC ::
Any style from contemporary to orchestral, choral to hip-hop!

Any Platform - DS (inc. conversions) Wii, PC, PSP, PS2-3 Xbox/360

VOICE OVER ::
Complete project management, multiple studios, excellent agency/talent relations localisation (JFIGS/SA) Post Production, QA

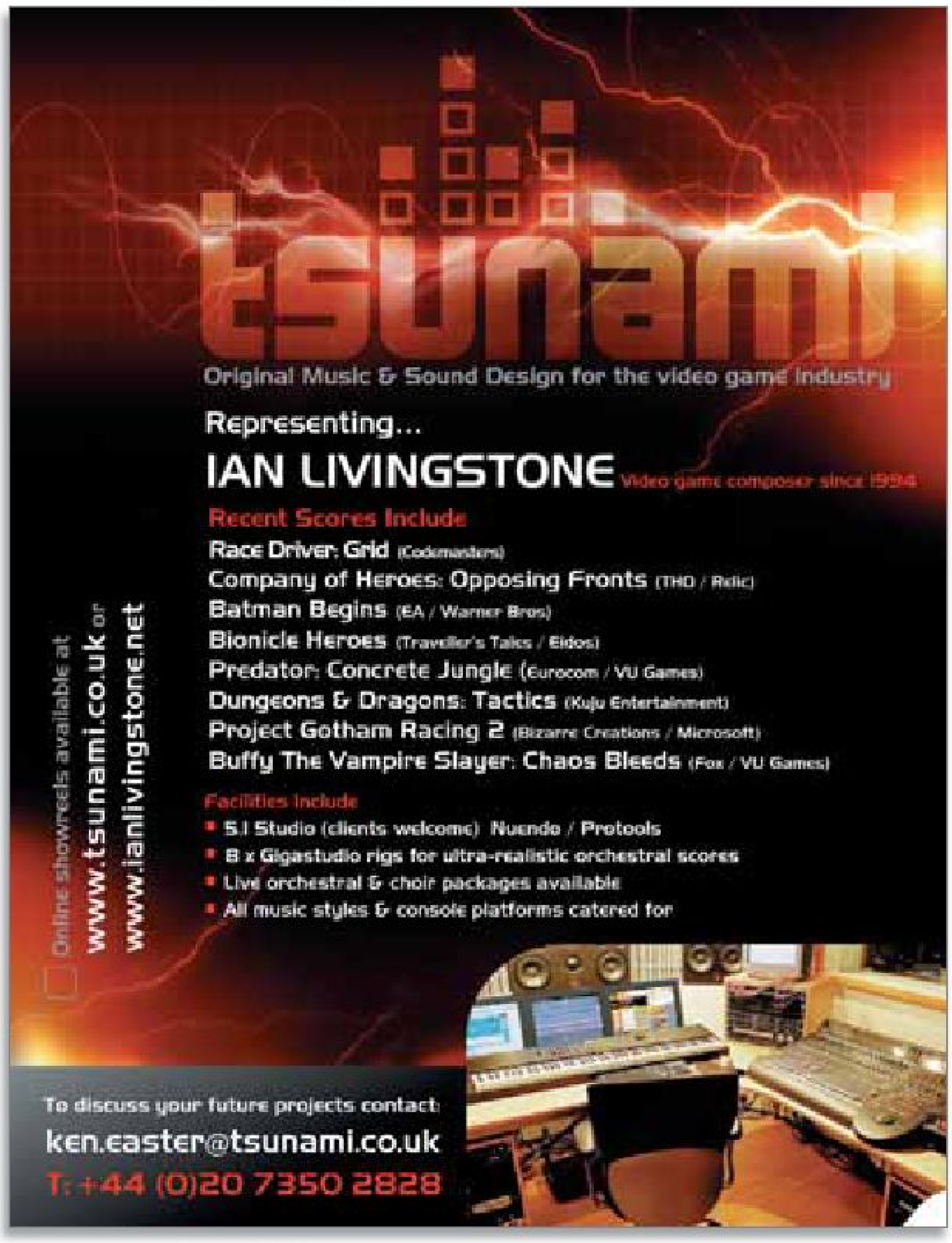
Sound Design & SFX
Dolby Surround

Call for a competitive quote
20% New Client Discount!
(see website for credits and testimonials)

HighScore productions

+44 (0) 1295 738337 ☎
office@high-score.co.uk
www.high-score.co.uk

Tsunami Sounds/Ian Livingstone 0207 350 2828 www.tsunami.co.uk



tsunami

Original Music & Sound Design for the video game industry

Representing…

IAN LIVINGSTONE Video game composer since 1994

Recent Scores Include
Race Driver: Grid (Codemasters)
Company of Heroes: Opposing Fronts (THQ / Relic)
Batman Begins (EA / Warner Bros)
Bionicle Heroes (Traveller's Tales / Eidos)
Predator: Concrete Jungle (Eurocom / VU Games)
Dungeons & Dragons: Tactics (Kuju Entertainment)
Project Gotham Racing 2 (Bizarre Creations / Microsoft)
Buffy The Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds (Fox / VU Games)

Facilities Include
- 5.1 Studio (clients welcome) Nuendo / Protools
- 8 x Gigastudio rigs for ultra-realistic orchestral scores
- Live orchestral & choir packages available
- All music styles & console platforms catered for

Online showreels available at
www.tsunami.co.uk or
www.ianlivingstone.net

To discuss your future projects contact:
ken.easter@tsunami.co.uk
T: +44 (0)20 7350 2828

Universally Speaking 01480 210621 www.usspeaking.com

Specialist Games Services

Localisation
» Global network of games specialised linguists
» Translators to cover all genres of games
» All languages covered
» In game, scripts, paper parts and marketing translations

Quality Assurance
» All platforms (Sony, Microsoft, Nintendo, PC and Mobile)
» Localisation QA
» Compliance checks for TRC, TCR and LOT approval
» Functionality QA

Audio
» Voice overs across all languages
» Full casting service
» Pre and post production including lip synching
» Highly experienced voice directors and engineers

US

UNIVERSALLY SPEAKING

Universally Speaking
Priory Chambers, Priory Lane, St Neots, Cambs., PE19 2BH, UK
Tel: +44 (0)1480 210621 info@usspeaking.com www.usspeaking.com

Training News

Tiga wants Games Education Fund

Tiga is calling for the establishment of a Games Education Fund to improve the standard of university courses aimed at the games development sector.

Taking its cue from a recent study by Wolverhampton University titled 'An investigation into the labour market and skills demands of the games and serious games industries', Tiga CEO Richard Wilson said that universities need to ensure their courses stay current and that students are given appropriate advice on career paths - something Tiga is attempting with its publication 'A guide to career paths in the game development sector'.

"We are strengthening business-university links in the games industry through the Tiga Technology Group, and we are disseminating best practice about industry-academia links," said Wilson. "But we need to do more. A Tiga-managed Games Education Fund could help to address many of the problems identified in this report."

The fund would be able to pay for the placement of lecturers in games businesses, finance research fellowships, help developers work with universities and award individual lecturers and universities for excellence in teaching.

The burden isn't all on educators however, says Wilson – games studios and the Government also have work to do. "Where possible, employers in the games industry must give greater emphasis to workforce development. Expenditure on skills and training can drive up productivity if properly focussed.

He added: "At a public policy level, the Government must aim to reduce the tax burden on games businesses and others so that more employers in the UK can afford to invest in training."

www.tiga.org

Goldsmiths +44 (0)20 70785052 www.gamesgoldsmiths.com

Goldsmiths, University of London
MSc Computer Games & Entertainment

www.gamesgoldsmiths.com

Location: Central London, 10 minutes from London Bridge
Director: William Latham

Develop Magazine 01992 535 647 www.developmag.com

develop DIRECTORY

GREAT ADVERTISING OPPORTUNITIES

CONTACT: JAZ

jaspreet.kandola@intentmedia.co.uk

Tel: 01992 535 647

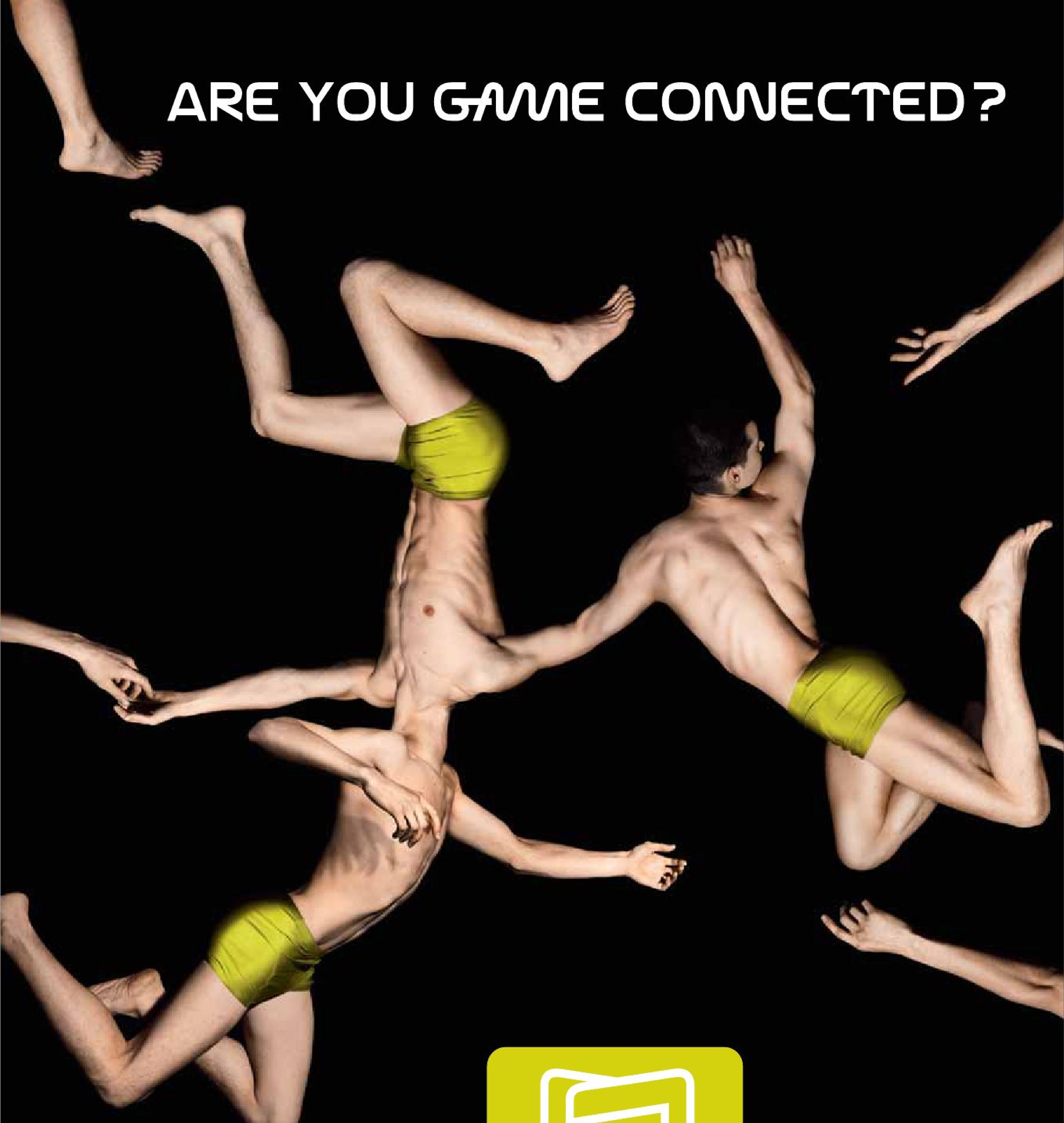
The University of Hull +44(0) 1482 465951 www.mscgames.com

MSc Games Programming
Hardcore Games Programming,
Physics and AI
Your fast track to a job as a games programmer
www.MScGames.com

"The course is rigorous and demanding, but in the end worth the hard work. I got two job offers from leading companies in the games industry within a month of completing my course. The best part is that I didn't really have to struggle to get them." Hussain Sheikh 2006 MSc
For more quotes from ex-students, examples of student work and syllabus information please visit www.mscgames.com.
PhD and BSc study also available.

Image courtesy of Codemasters. All rights reserved.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL


ARE YOU GAME CONNECTED?

GAME CONNECTION

GAME CONNECTION AMERICA

@ GDC, San Francisco, USA

March 24-26 2009

WWW.GAME-CONNECTION.COM

Don't Miss the Early Bird Registration
Deadline: **January 9th**

interstudio.fr - photo : © aurélien dupuis

THE BYRONIC MAN

We asked five journalists what we thought of **Simon Byron**: Strangely, they'd all give him one...

The journalist slammed his glass on the table. "The thing is," he slurred. "I play games all day. I know what's good and bad about them. I can tell in ten seconds whether it's a game people should buy. And that's why…" a fist came crashing down, spilling puddles of over-priced booze, "…I should write games for a living."

This ludicrous statement was lost on the table. His peers obviously murmured in agreement. I thought: "You utter idiot, that's like saying just because I listen to music, I can play the guitar." Back in the real world, I slapped him on the back, told him he was right and ordered another round.

PR Executive of the Year, 2000.

I'm not sure what qualifications one needs to become a games journalist these days. I scraped in on only five O Levels – but the barriers to entry have fallen so far over recent years that anyone with the ability to type words into the Internet can almost legitimately call themselves 'press'.

A decent score from a respected games publication can make all the difference at retail. But one 10/10 is no longer enough, it seems – we need to ask more and more people whether what we think they think is correct. Thank God, then, for the Internet, and its ridiculous freedom of information. Now, anyone with fingers can have a voice, thanks to the rise of aggregated review sites which take everything everyone says and distill it down to one happy colour-coded number.

Some sort of central hub of opinion is fine in theory – why make up your mind yourself when you can simply think what everyone else does? – but Metacritic's shadow is looming larger and larger over the business, its influence largely unchallenged or questioned. Share prices, it appear, can rise or fall on a Metacritic percentage point – investors buy or sell depending according to the Internet average. Hell, even *Develop*'s sister publication *MCV* has started running stories about Metacritic scores – perpetuating the illusion that the site has some merit.

> **"Metacritic panders to the score-obsessed autism that proper journalists become dismayed about..."**

Start digging round the site beyond the headline scores, though, and things quickly become worrying. Its sources are a mix of the top specialist review destinations and loads of My First Internet Sites.

A cursory search shows one gave *Guitar Hero World Tour*'s "story" nine out of ten; another had, at the time of writing, reviewed 24 Xbox 360 games all year – roughly the amount released for the console in one Friday during November. On another, a review for *Bioshock* on PS3 had been read by 451 people in its month since publication – you could shout an opinion on Oxford Street and influence more people than that, as that God-loves-you man will attest.

Check out some of the forums; they are literally dead space. Eight people had voted on one site as to whether *LittleBigPlanet*'s delay "would affect it's [sic] worldwide sales". Many of these sites appear to have been set up for the sole purpose of getting free review copies from publishers. You may as well ask one of the tramps pissed-up down the bus-shelter whether they'd give *Resistance 2* an eight or a nine; get a nursery of one-year-olds to potato-paint a number to signify the success of *Far Cry 2*'s transition to a sandbox world.

Yet these are the prestigious media outlets that Metacritic has identified as the best in the world. Ones they'll listen to and allocate a score – once it's gone through their own secret weighting system, of course. Yes, that's right: Metacritic reviews the reviewers. We're told that certain sites and certain individuals may carry more weight and therefore have their opinions counted double or something. Yet we're not permitted to know how exactly they do this. We're just supposed to judge the opinion of a site which apparently doesn't have an opinion.

The system is utterly flawed, pandering to the sort of score-obsessed autism that proper journalists – the ones who actually labour long and hard over their actual words – become legitimately dismayed about.

Warner Brothers' senior vice president Jason Hall once argued that Metacritic should be used to judge royalty payments. Interesting that the firm's *300: March to Glory* on PSP gained scores ranging from 85 to 10 per cent. Out of those, which would you trust? Most of the Internet is nonsense, words barely spell checked before they're up online. But to legitimise much of this rubbish into some sort of official catch-all opinion which can influence stocking decisions, publisher commissions and shareholder confidence seems grotesque to me.

simon@thetriforce.com

develop FORWARD PLANNER

FEBURARY 2009

Recruitment Special
Event: Games Grads
Regional Focus: Cambridge
Copy Deadline: January 22nd

MARCH 2009

GDC 2009 – Show Issue
Event: GDC 2009, Game Connection America
Regional Focus: North East
Copy Deadline: February 19th

APRIL 2009

DEVELOP 100
Copy Deadline: March 19th

MAY 2009

Legal
Copy Deadline: April 22nd

JUNE 2009

Game Engines
Event: Paris GDC
Copy Deadline: May 21st

JULY 2009

Develop in Brighton – Show Issue
Event: Develop Conference
Copy Deadline: June 18th

EDITORIAL enquiries should go through to Michael.French@intentmedia.co.uk, or call him on 01992 535646

To discuss **ADVERTISING** contact Katie.Rawlings@intentmedia.co.uk, or call her on 01992 535647

It's time to show off your gaming skills.

Amiqus Talent Network

When it comes to finding the top **Studio Manager, Designer, Producer, Programmer** and **Art/Animation** roles for you - Amiqus has the talent.

For the best roles, some of which you'll never see advertised, simply join the Amiqus Talent Network and become part of the select group of people who get to hear about them first.

To take your career to the next level, simply register at **amiqustalentnetwork.com**

MOST
Studio Manager
Tester
Programmer
Designer
Animator
Producer
WANTED
The Chosen Few
THE INSIDER
X-clusive

amiqus
GAMES

BLUEGFX IN GAMES
Autodesk Media & Entertainment Product Supplier

Autodesk

"The flexibility of bluegfx has proven yet again invaluable to the workings within our organization, The incredible dedication and professionalism they show their clients is truly second to none, bluegfx is and always will be our first choice"

Dave West
Art manager - Atomic Planet Entertainment Ltd.
Image from "Scorpion" Wii, Xbox and PS3

ATOMIC PLANET
entertainment Ltd

bluegfx
Autodesk N.European Channel Partner 2008
www.bluegfx.com

BICESTER
+44 (0)1869 255815

GUILDFORD
+44 (0)1483 467200

LONDON
+44 (0)870 890 3618

Autodesk
Authorised Training Centre

Autodesk
Premier Solutions Provider
Media & Entertainment